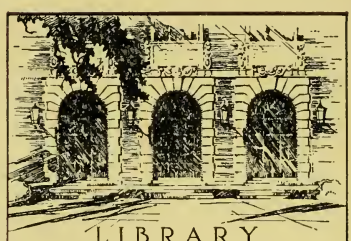

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ROMANCE

OF

THE PYRENEES.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ROMANCE

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CHAP. I.

SOME moments elapsed before Victoria's sense and respiration returned; when throwing her arms around Roselia's neck, she gave some relief to her bursting heart by a flood of tears; and soon after, disconsolate and full of sorrow, she retired to the apartments allotted for her, where, the misery of her mind operating upon her harassed frame, the next morning found her with every symptom of approaching illness. Father Pierre was summoned; but medicine could not reach the source of her disease, although it helped to strengthen her frame in sustaining

it. Every tender attention was paid to her by the Benedictine sisters, and the almost distracted Roselia's affection evinced itself more and more each passing moment; and our suffering heroine, ever grateful for the kindness she received, exerted herself to the utmost to repel the virulence of that mental anguish which threatened destruction to her health, and for the sake of poor Roselia to appear serene. Incessantly Victoria prayed for fortitude and resignation: but Heaven, for the first time, disregarded the pious supplications of our heroine; for, notwithstanding every exertion, her heart still writhed in anguish at the idea of giving up Urbino for ever: yet still she was resolute, since rectitude told her it must be so; and, though torturing was the task that rigid guide assigned her, she determined to perform it, even should her heart break in the execution.

Father Pierre brought Victoria the information of Urbino with the good Anselmo, and attended by Thomas, having set out, in a pitiable state of agitation and melancholy, for Rome in two hours after his

return from St. Marguerite's; that the duchessa and her two vile associates, Bianca and Maratti, had absconded from the château immediately after our persecuted heroine had left it, but that no one knew whither they were gone; and that comte de Montfort, in a state of the most imbecile despondence, was preparing to set out for England, where he purposed passing the remainder of his life.

Signora Farinelli was at her brother's house in Florence when Roselia's letter arrived there; and as soon as the utmost expedition in traveling, and the most impatient anxiety to reach it, could convey her, she was at St. Marguerite's. The abbess prepared her for the languid state and mental illness she would find her adored pupil in: but when Victoria's chamber-door was opened to admit her, and she beheld the attenuated form and wan cheeks of the darling of her heart, so much did she find her altered more than even apprehension had pourtrayed, that she could not command her feelings. In all the agony of high-wrought grief she clasped the shadow of her once

blooming Victoria in her arms, and wept over her in all the trembling anguish of a fond and doting mother, who has just found a long-lost child only to undergo the torturing pang of closing its eyes for ever.

The presence of her Ursuline, her second mother, was a source of genuine delight and comfort to Victoria; it seemed a renovating cordial to her languid spirits; but it could not heal the rankling wound that appeared to the anxious observer to be mining fast her excellent constitution. However, it proved a considerable relief to our drooping invalid to pour out every secret of her guileless heart into the bosom of her beloved friend, and to talk to her of Urbino and Matilda; for to Roselia, well as she loved her, she had never mentioned the latter; since only to a being sacred as she held her Ursuline to be, would she breathe a sound that could depreciate the merit of Urbino.

Signora Farinelli was perplexed and distressed beyond conception; for, not knowing the history of Matilda, or the motives which might have actuated the conduct of Urbino, she could not vindicate, neither

could she condemn him. She would not therefore raise a hope in her darling's breast that might prove a delusion; nor were there, she thought, sufficient grounds for consigning her to despair. The conduct of Urbino to Victoria argued, she was convinced, no prior attachment, but spoke in every trait of it, and in the most decided language, an ardent, pure, and unconquerable one for her; and so amiable did he appear to Ursuline in every point of view, where the clouds of mystery that hung over him would permit her to see him as the free agent of his own actions, that she would scarcely give herself leave to doubt but that Victoria must, in her alarm and agitation, have misconceived the import of Matilda's words.

"I have no doubt," said Victoria in reply to her venerable friend, "I have no doubt of the sincerity of Urbino's attachment to me. Can I doubt it, after the incontestable proofs he has given me of it? But is that a reason that I should be the means of tarnishing his fair fame, or inducing him to continue unjust and cruel? I have reason to believe he loved Matilda long ere he saw

blooming Victoria in her arms, and wept over her in all the trembling anguish of a fond and doting mother, who has just found a long-lost child only to undergo the torturing pang of closing its eyes for ever.

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mental and bodily health at the Carthusian convent, to Rome, in quest of Urbino and Anselmo, for the safety of whom the most serious apprehensions were beginning to be entertained.

On the evening prior to Diego's intended departure upon this anxious embassy, as Ursuline and Roselia were with Victoria in her apartment, the former striving to beguile her beloved child of her sadness by reading an interesting publication to her, a lay sister entered, to request signora Farinelli would favour the superior for a few moments with her company.

Ursuline instantly complied; but staid away so long, that our now easily alarmed heroine dispatched Roselia to learn if any thing particular had occurred to detain her venerable friend. Roselia returned not;—and Victoria, ever apprehensive of hearing some dreadful intelligence of Urbino, could not long brook the misery of anticipating fear; and with a bounding heart and trembling frame hastily descended to the abbess's parlour, and, softly opening the door, beheld her Ursuline extended on the sopha,

pale as death, with the most heartfelt woe and horror in the extreme forcibly depicted on her countenance; while by her side sat the abbess and Roselia, both sobbing in convulsive anguish. But ere she had power to inquire into the cause of such alarming agitations, she anticipated all, on beholding, through the grate, poor faithful Thomas striding up and down the room, wringing his hands and smiting his breast, whilst sorrow's large tears chased one another down his sun-burnt cheeks.

Every pang calamity could give now struck upon Victoria's bleeding heart; but from the wreck of her happiness fortitude sprung up, and, as if some supernatural influence instantly pervaded her frame and mind, she stood firm and collected, prepared to meet the fullest shock that information now could give her.

"Speak, Thomas!" she exclaimed in a tone of intrepid fortitude. "Tell me instantly the dreadful intelligence that has brought you here. Urbino is dead; or, worse, has fallen into the hands of his enemies? Speak, tell me, tell me at once that

fate has snapped the thread of my existence?"

On the first sound of Victoria's voice Thomas hastily strode up to the grate, grasped the bars with all his might, and looking most piteously upon her, he, as well as the dreadful agitation of his mind would permit, at length articulated: "Ah, poor precious dear! what a broadside of sorrow am I come to sink your shattered little bark with!—for, oh! my dear, my brave, my good, my noble captain has fallen-in with the infernal renegadoes! The devil's marines surrounded him and the venerable Sebastian, and towed them, with the poor old monk Anselmo, into the whirlpool of their vengeance!"

This was indeed a broadside that tore away every shadow of hope, and but for the most animated exertions of fortitude must have driven her at once into the gulf of despair; and clasping now the bars of the grate to save her from falling, she hastily cried in a tone of misery and firmness touchingly blended—

"Oh! tell me all! tell me quickly every

dreadful particular! Is he alive? Oh! tell me he is, and that there still exists a possibility that our exertions yet may save him!"

The benevolent and considerate abbess gently approached our heroine, and placed herself close behind her, ready to afford her every necessary assistance; but forbore to interrupt her with assiduities, believing that to recall her ideas to other objects might enervate the magnanimity which Heaven itself seemed to have inspired her with for some great purpose; while with much difficulty Victoria collected from the unconnected account and strange jumbled jargon of poor Thomas the subsequent particulars.

"Urbino, Anselmo, and Thomas, had embarked at Nice, and landed at Pisa, on their way to Rome; and were waiting for a carriage to convey them on, when they saw Francisco and Sebastian, in the most visible agitation, step out of a carriage in the inn-yard at Pisa. Urbino in much amazement flew to them, who, in their turn, were equally astonished at beholding him, and as much overjoyed as their evident dejection

would permit them to be. Together they all three entered the parlour where Anselmo was; and soon after Thomas saw Francisco and Urbino go out, visibly oppressed by some serious affliction, and bend their course to the quay, where they engaged a vessel to sail immediately; and, in a short time after, they all, Urbino, Sebastian, Anselmo, Francisco, and Thomas, embarked wirh a fair wind for Cadaques.

" Whilst on board, Thomas learned from what was said, that they were going to rescue, if possible, some young woman, whom they called Matilda, from the power of Don Manuel, into whose hands she had fallen during Francisco's absence from Spain; and by means of the Inquisition, whom Anselmo advised their laying the matter before, they hoped to effect their purpose, should the schemes of Francisco fail, who had some secret reasons for thinking he could rescue her without applying to such violent measures. That conte Urbino seemed particularly miserable during the voyage, perpetually accusing himself as the primary cause of Matilda's misfortunes,

until he would almost wind himself into a state of distraction; when nothing seemed to give him comfort, or recall his agitated mind to comparative serenity, but the handkerchief Victoria had bound round Thomas's wound the night of Alonzo's daring enterprise, and which Urbino had, while in the dungeon with Thomas, taken from him, and since kept constantly in his bosom: and in those moments of despair he would draw it forth, press it with fervor to his lips, and look upon it until he became so sadly calm, that all who beheld him felt interested in his grief, and lamented to see him a prey to such deep sorrow.

"At length they safely reached Cadaques, where Francisco left them; and, according to his directions, all, in the habit of monks, set out at midnight to join him in his cell, near Don Manuel's castle.

"The part of the forest that led to Francisco's dwelling was known only to Urbino; and by some unfortunate mistake, probably in a moment of his now almost perpetual fits of melancholy absence, he took a wrong path, and involved himself and his compa-

nions so much in the mazes of the wood, that vain was his every effort to extricate them from it.

" Weary, chagrined, and distressed, the night found them; and it was agreed to by all, that could they find any shelter from the prowling wolves, which would soon begin to roam, they would cease to wander further in search of Francisco's cave until light returned to guide them. At length they discovered a goatherd's cot, where they were hospitably received; and Thomas being the only one of the party inclined to sleep, retired to a loft, whither his host conducted him, and where, on a truss of straw, he soon lost, in a profound slumber, all recollection of the world, its toils and woes; but from which he was dreadfully awakened by his host, who entered the loft in terrible consternation, and roused poor Thomas just time enough to hear the sound of horses' feet rapidly lessening on the ear. His dismayed host instantly informed him, that as he and the three monks were sitting discoursing before a blazing faggot on the hearth, the door of the hut suddenly burst

open, and a band of armed ruffians rushed in, and, seizing the monks, notwithstanding the desperate valour of the young one (for numbers prevailed over courage), carried them off without his being able to afford them any assistance.

" Thomas's first impulse was immediately to follow them, even into the jaws of destruction—Don Manuel's castle, where he doubted not they were taken; but his more prudent host displaying to him the madness and folly of such an attempt, soon convinced him he could more essentially serve them by retaining his liberty. He then thought of applying to the Inquisition; but, upon reflexion, believed it better to leave fishing in that troubled water to wiser heads than his own: and conceiving no one could or ought to be so interested in the fate of Urbino as his wife, he thought it his duty instantly to repair to her; and therefore at dawn of day his kind host put him into the road to Cadaques, from whence in a few hours he embarked for Nice, and from thence had come with the utmost expedition to St. Marguerite's: and with many bitter and ludi-

crous invectives against Matilda, as a syren who had enticed another woman's husband from the post of constancy, to wreck him upon the shoals of destruction," poor Thomas concluded his afflicting narrative.

Victoria was dreadfully agitated during this recital; yet fortitude still preserved its empire unsubdued. That such deep interest for the fate of Matilda had drawn Urbino into the vortex of destruction, in spite of the precepts of rectitude, added a pang to her bleeding heart, but did not diminish her ardent solicitude to save him. She felt with the most feminine sensibility, but bore with manly firmness; and turning to the weeping abbess, in a soft tone of saddest sympathy she said—

"Alas! my dearest madam, you are a participator in my misery. Your brother is lost, unless Urbino is saved. Oh! hasten then to interest the monks of St. Lewis in our cause: they have power, and, influenced by you, will have inclination ably to assist us."

"Most certainly," replied the truly afflicted abbess, "I will hasten to apply to the prior, who will exert his power, which

is great indeed, to extricate us from this heart-rending calamity, and——"

"But instantly, madam, must you make your application," eagerly interrupted Victoria; "the smallest interval of delay may prove of the utmost importance. Even now and our beloved friends may be doomed to a noisome dungeon, suffering every torture that insatiate vengeance and diabolical cruelty can inflict. Delay, then, is barbarity, is criminal in us; and protected or not by the monks of St. Lewis, I will this very night, attended by Diego and poor faithful Thomas, set out for Spain."

"You, my child!" exclaimed Farinelli, starting from the bench in dreadful alarm: "you! so weak, so ill! It cannot, shall not be."

"Nay, but, my dear, my second mother," said Victoria, and determinately she spoke, "not even the pleadings of friendship, nor the influence of your unerring and superior judgment, can alter now my resolution. Urbino is my husband; and while I am his wife I will perform my duty, which now tells me I ought to aim at saving him from

destruction; and fixed as fate is my determination to attempt it. Under the protection of the holy Inquisition we will enter the castle of Don Manuel; and guided by Thomas and Diego we shall be empowered to explore many secret places, and perchance, permitted by Heaven, to deliver from misery and bondage the friends we seek. My health cannot, shall not, prove a barrier to the performance of my duty; and fully am I convinced, that life must fall a sacrifice did I neglect to follow implicitly the dictates of my heart upon this calamitous occasion. By hope I shall be sustained through the arduous enterprise, and shall gain both health and happiness, should Providence lead me to success."

Ursuline saw, in the enthusiasm of Victoria, much cause of alarm for her delicate state of health; yet also saw that contradiction might prove of the most fatal consequences: and keenly grieved, she tacitly acquiesced, resolving to accompany her upon the hazardous expedition, should father Pierre not be able to prevail upon her to abandon the rash project.

The poor exhausted Thomas was committed to the special care of the domestics. The nuns were summoned by the devout and sorrowful abbess into the choir, to unite in prayers for the safety and deliverance of father Anselmo and his companions from the hands of their enemies; while a messenger was dispatched to St. Lewis, to entreat the immediate attendance of all those whom the abbess and Victoria wished to consult.

CHAP. II.

As soon as it was possible, the prior of St. Lewis, with father Pierre, two other monks, and Diego, arrived at St. Marguerite's, when great was their dismay and consternation on hearing the dreadful and afflicting intelligence. A long and interesting consultation ensued, in which the advice of Diego was much attended to; and at length a plan was determined upon and pursued the following morning at dawn of day, when Victoria, signora Farinelli, Roselia, fathers Pierre, Leonard, and St. Romaine, Diego, and Thomas, disguised as a company of pilgrims, set out for Nice; where engaging a vessel bound for Cadaques, they sailed with an auspicious wind, and disembarked at that port after a providentially expeditious passage; and immediately upon their arrival there the monks gave intimation at the holy office of their important business in Spain.

It was well for the cause Victoria had so deeply at heart that Anselmo was high in the estimation of the prior of St. Lewis, who was the beloved friend and kinsman of the then reigning pontiff; and was also, from the piety and austerity of his house, which he was the founder of, as well as from the immense wealth of his convent, one of the most powerful men of the church. His voice bore with it an authority almost unequalled, since all were aware that, if his wishes were not instantly complied with, they would be arbitrarily enforced by a mandate from the papal chair. His word was, therefore, seldom disputed; and even the dreadful and tyrannical synod of the Inquisition, even from Rome to Madrid and Lisbon, bowed submissively to his decrees: and well acquainted with all the links and mysteries of that horrid chain of machinery, he took care to use every means in his power to make the credentials with which he entrusted his brothers, Pierre and St. Romaine, decisive; and to these, ignorant of the mysteries of this dreadful institution, appeared almost incredible the celerity with which

intelligence was conveyed to and from the higher and far distant powers, or the promptitude with which secret meetings were convened to annihilate that horde of villains, who for years had successfully eluded the vigilance of the ecclesiastic and civil power, or dexterously thrown gold dust into the eyes of the Dominicans: and, by means apparently almost supernatural, a large force was collected and all arranged, unknown to every mortal but those interested or engaged in the enterprise, in a very short period after Pierre and his brothers had presented their memorial to that terror-inspiring synod.

It was determined that the three females should remain at Cadaques, under the protection of the ecclesiastic power; while the monks of St. Lewis, with Diego and Thomas, should attend the formidable forces of the Inquisition to the castle of Don Manuel; and at the appointed hour, which was in the dead of night, this dreadful troop, alike the scourge of vice and the persecution of innocence, set forward under the auspices of Diego; who, before he would undertake to guide the party to the castle, had ob-

tained a solemn, but secret, promise from father Pierre, to favour the escape of Don Manuel, should he be found at home. And, totally unknown to, or suspected by any of her own adherents, except poor Thomas, Victoria contrived to accompany this formidable phalanx, habited as an official monk—a disguise which she and Thomas had with infinite risk and difficulty bribed and persuaded one of the familiars of the holy office to provide her with. Ursuline and Roselia she left buried in a profound sleep; and with a perturbation of spirits painfully violent, and with a heart torn by ten thousand hopes and dreadful fears, she entered the forest in the awful procession. The energy of her mind gave strength to her frame; and, assisted by the friendly arm of Thomas, inconceivable was the fatigue she endured, making way through brambles and underwood, and climbing over large masses of rock which they met with continually in the forest; but the soothing hope of liberating Urbino sustained her still, and beguiled the way of half its toil.

At length Diego led them to a huge pile of rocks, up which they with much difficulty clambered; and, entering the hollow of a monstrous tree upon the summit, they quickly descended into an immense labyrinth of caverns, where without a guide they might have wandered unsuccessfully, and at length have only found famine and destruction. But long initiated in the mysteries of this intricate place, Diego conducted them in safety; and leading them through an iron grating (of such ingenious, yet terrible, mechanism, that a complete knowledge only of its formation could conduct you through it without the absolute certainty of being crushed to atoms by its innumerable barbed wheels), they entered a long cavern, from which they passed into a defile that wound upwards through immense rocks; and when they reached the summit of this winding and steep acclivity, they found themselves hanging over a tremendous precipice, in an apparently illimitable cavern, over the vale of which a torrent of water rushed impetuously along,

forming into innumerable foaming cataracts in its course, every moment spouting up its phrensied surges with frightful violence to a considerable height, or turning with dreadful velocity in angry whirlpools.

The first of the formidable troop who reached this horrid precipice, shuddering at the scene before them, were about to retire, believing Diego had mistaken the way, as no possible method of further progress appeared to them, except into the fangs of destruction. But their faithful guide, desiring them not to doubt his being equal to the task he had undertaken, pulled an iron ring concealed among the rocks, and immediately a dreadful reverberated clang was heard, astounding to the ears, and making even inquisitors tremble; and all were rushing back, in horrid dismay, when the entreaties and assurances of Diego induced them to exert sufficient courage to wait the event of their alarmed expectations. At length slowly and awfully an iron draw-bridge descended from its concealment in the roof, and fixed itself stedfastly upon the rock where they stood; and they soon found the

chains of this and the ponderous iron-work, rattling in the descent, had caused these horrid sounds, by the magic of echo re-iterating them with loud and hollow din from rock to rock.

All now passing this bridge, and descending a short but steep declivity on the opposite side, they soon found themselves in the vaults of that castle so long the dread and scourge of Catalonia, and so justly deemed inaccessible even to the Inquisition. From the vaults easy was their progress; and after mounting a few stairs that wound round the western tower, and passing through two or three small apartments and long passages, all separated from each other by secret ways Diego and Thomas only could have led them through, this tremendous body at last safely arrived in the great hall, in solemn procession, steady, resolved, and silent as the grave, in the moment that the clock in the dome above them struck the fifth hour. It sounded majestically slow; but loud, sweet, and awfully impressive was its tone. It seemed to toll the knell of the innocent beings who had been murdered in that

place—the signal for the extirpation of vice, and the triumph of justice and virtue. Something of religious awe struck on the hearts of all; the whole troop on the same instant ceased to move; and all covered their faces in solemn reverence, influenced by the same idea—a belief that the eye of the Omnipresent was fixed upon them.

The monks of St. Lewis and our heroine had from the same impulse meekly sunk upon their knees: and after offering up their devout petitions for success, they all arose about the same time; Victoria, stedfast in her belief of divine interposition; and father Pierre, firm in faith, to break the awful pause, and lead his forces on to action.

The torches which had lit them through the caverns were now all carefully extinguished, and dark lanterns substituted, as corresponding more with secresy and caution; and the whole troop were instantly and silently divided into three detachments. One was to remain stationary in the hall, to guard the passes around them; while the second, guided by Thomas, proceeded to

the chamber of Garcias; and the third, led on by Diego and father Pierre, hastened to the apartments of Don Manuel. And during this interval it would be utterly impossible for the feeble pen of the present historian to pourtray the agitation of our poor heroine; left without support, save her own firmness and reliance upon Heaven, with a multitude of armed and terror-inspiring men, in the hall of that castle where her sufferings had been so dreadful, and where the dæmoniac appearance of those who now surrounded her recalled every past horror to her remembrance. But those were only corporeal apprehensions, striking with tremulous hand on the chords of personal courage, and faded into nothing when compared to her mental feelings. On the success of those who had in the terrible array of death and destruction just stolen off, like the midnight thief or secret assassin, to assail vice in her own habitation, depended the fate of Urbino: on their victory hung the thread of her existence. Well was she aware of the power and number of Don Manuel's myrmidons, even formidable to

her as the host of the Inquisition; and though her firm reliance upon the goodness of Heaven inspired the most flattering thrills of hope, the frailty of mortality still industriously presented to her sickening fancy every fear that could agonise her tortured heart.

To pourtray the feelings of Diego's susceptible heart from the moment he became the guide of the Inquisition into the castle, but more immediately during the moments of his passage from the hall to the chamber of Don Manuel, would be a task of greater difficulty still. The pious Carthusians had presented to him every argument that could be deduced from religion and morality, to reconcile him to the act of betraying Don Manuel, and convince him that vice had no claims on virtue; and that the latter must break all bonds with the former before it could become pure and perfect. Diego's reason readily subscribed to their doctrines. He was convinced they were just. He received in due form absolution for his breaking his oath of fealty to his master, and undertook all that was required of him. But still his heart rebelled: it was

torn by contending passions; it was at war with its own feelings: for the arguments of the monks had not subdued his affection for and gratitude to Don Manuel, whose crimes he had ever detested, even while he participated in them. But that subtile man had won his love before his judgment had ripened to maturity; and he then believed the fund of gratitude ought to be unceasing for rescuing him from misery and bondage: and gratitude had interwoven itself into the very stamina of Diego's heart before he was aware that the obligation Don Manuel had conferred upon him was merely changing the nature of his captivity, and saving his body from cruel treatment to plunge his soul into eternal misery. The predilections imbibed in early life are not easily eradicated; and the path of duty, when not entered with every feeling of inclination, is deprived of half its sweets. That not-to-be-extinguished partiality for Don Manuel now flashed its fiery rays of upbraiding upon the susceptible soul of Diego; and he would have refused to proceed, and have braved all the tortures of the offended Inquisition,

had not the purer unalloyed flame of gratitude and attachment to the family of Ariosto led him on. But, as he approached Don Manuel's chamber, he felt the trepidation of his heart pervading his whole frame: yes, the brave Diego trembled; for he was compelled by duty to betray a man whom he loved, to all the horrors of the Inquisition. But still he hoped to save him; for, with all his crimes, Diego fondly believed there was some genial soil for penitence about him yet: and with tremulous hand, and unseen by all but Pierre, he touched a kind of silent alarum which communicated with Don Manuel's bed, and was intended to apprise him of the immediate approach of danger, and give him time to escape by one of those secret passages with which the castle abounded.

Diego now pointed to Don Manuel's door. The officials instantly burst in. Diego followed with faultering steps, and with a countenance pale as the shade of death. But casting his anxious fearing eyes around, and knowing by the appearance of the apartment that Don Manuel had not occu-

pied it that night, and was consequently absent from the castle, the fugitive blood returned to his cheeks, the fire of animation flashed from his before haggard eyes—his step became firm—his mien erect; Diego beamed a sweet smile of heartfelt satisfaction, and was himself again.

Don Manuel's chamber having undergone the most minute inspection, Diego led the officials into every chamber usually inhabited in that district of the castle, as well as into those which were not: but not a being could be found; while many of the rooms bore the appearance of having been occupied that very night, and, by the scattered garments, gave evident reason to suppose they had been precipitately abandoned by the inhabitants; which introduced suspicion of the faith of the Inquisition into the mind of the pious though not bigoted Pierre. But prudence suffered not his thoughts to wander from the confines of his own breast: while Diego, in painful amazement, doubted not their having been betrayed; and that Don Manuel's forces were then encompassing the castle, possessed of every

pass ; in which case the host of the Inquisition were doomed to inevitable destruction. His dreadful apprehensions Diego hesitated not to communicate to those with him ; who all subscribing to the reasonableness of his fears, instantly participated in them ; and, in dismay and consternation, precipitately returned to the hall, to consult with their associates upon those strokes of generalship that could possibly be attempted to extricate them from the destruction that probably awaited them, just as Thomas and his troop returned, after a search equally unsuccessful as their own.

By this time Aurora had raised the thin veil of morn so high, that the golden beams of the great orb of day were beginning to emanate their glowing rays from beneath it ; and, dispersing the grey gloom of twilight, enabled Diego and a reconnoitring party to make observations from the battlements and ramparts, where not a sentinel of Don Manuel's was now visible : when Diego, finding every reason to believe his presaging fears were groundless, returned to the hall with the glad tidings of safety ; and it was

then agreed to proceed immediately to the dungeons, to liberate the hapless captives.

Gonzalvo's apartments too were abandoned, and in great disorder; his trunks and cupboards all open, and stripped of every valuable: whilst on the floor and tables lay clothes, books, and papers scattered; and among which the keys of the dungeons were found. Torches were again lit; and a large detachment attended Diego to strike off the fetters of cruelty; to give light, life, liberty, and joy to the children of misery and bondage.

CHAP. III.

EVERY nerve and artery in Thomas's frame now throbbed with the remembrance that he was a Briton; and on the impetuous wings of national feeling he was flying to give what he deemed the first of blessings, liberty, to his fellow creatures, when affection to Urbino arrested his flight, and placed him by the side of Victoria to guard her from harm, whom he believed his lamented captain prized beyond existence—for our heroine was among those hastening to the dungeons. But the poignancy of her feelings, now she believed her fate approaching its crisis, so agitated her trembling frame, that vain would have been every effort to proceed had not the friendly arm of Thomas been ready to sustain her. And now, when descended into the passage leading to these dreadful cells, where horror and cruelty had long kept vigil, it would be impos-

sible to pourtray her sensations. Each cell that was opened, each plaintive voice that murmured out for mercy, racked her panting heart to direst torture. Hope flattering her with the belief of finding Urbino in the newly-opened cell; that hope each moment sadly disappointed; the frantic joy or mournful apathy displayed by the emancipated captives, many of whom had for years been consigned to misery and despair—all struck too powerfully upon her sensibility for long endurance; and, quite subdued, she entreated Thomas to lead her back to the hall, lest her feelings would betray her: and at the moment Thomas was about to obey her, a door was opened, which discovered a female captive kneeling on a truss of straw; when Victoria rushing forward, almost deprived of reason by joy and amazement, clasped to her agitated breast signora Octavia, who, dreadfully alarmed by the commotions in the dungeons, was supplicating Heaven for protection; when roused by astonishment from her invocation, and pushing back the monkish cowl to see who clasped her so fervently to a palpitating

heart, discovered to the wondering beholders the beautiful head of our heroine.

Father Pierre and Diego were now in the utmost consternation. What a scene for the gentle spirits and delicate frame of lady Victoria to be engaged in! Severely they condemned her temerity, and trembled for its effects; and whilst pausing to consider what plan they ought to pursue, one of the inquisitors, whose face was entirely shaded by the cowl appropriate to the habit, glided by Diego, saying as he passed in a low and hollow voice—

"Convey lady Victoria to the apartments of Sebastian, where you will find Teresa."

Diego's powers of action were for a moment suspended by astonishment; while the inquisitor, mingling with the crowd, soon was lost to Diego's scrutinising eye. Conjecture at length giving way to certainty, Diego hastened to do as he was directed; and, taking Victoria in his arms, requested father Pierre to conduct signora Bernini; and desiring Thomas to stay with the officials to guide them to the secret cells, and to bring immediate intelligence to them in

Sebastian's apartments, if any of those whom they so anxiously sought for were found, he proceeded to the hall.

A flood of tears coming to Victoria's relief, she was soon sufficiently recovered to walk with the support of Diego's arm; and drawing the cowl over her face to save her from the further gaze of the men, they passed into the hall: where Diego, fearing some treachery might lurk beneath the mysterious inquisitor's habit, ordered a detachment of the troops to attend him in exploring the apartments of Sebastian before he would suffer Victoria to enter them: and, upon examination, finding all safe, he led our heroine, Octavia, and father Pierre into a spacious room, which had been the study and eating-parlour of Sebastian. Adjoining it were two good chambers, which had been occupied by himself and his beloved Theodore. Here they found the poor agitated Teresa in pitiable dismay; although the sight of Diego, and the succinct account he had given her of her captivity being ended, had restored in some degree the powers of her mind, which were before almost lost

in wild affright. And here the prudent Diego thought Victoria and Octavia might remain secluded from those heterogeneous beings now in such numbers in the castle; and as of the conduct of the captives in particular they could possibly form no judgment, they being of all nations and of all descriptions of people, and were to remain in the castle until the Inquisition thought proper to dismiss them, he wished Victoria to continue in a detached apartment, secured from interruption or annoyance in any shape, as long as she should choose to remain in the castle, where he fervently wished her rashness had not led her.

The poor appalled Teresa allowed Victoria to enter the room unheeded by her, as her face was covered; but the moment she beheld Octavia she wildly shrieked, and, tottering towards the good monk and Victoria, earnestly implored them to exorcise the spirit of the poor murdered donna. With difficulty was she convinced of Bernini's being substance; and her joy and astonishment could only be equalled by her former terror, when Victoria, raising her cowl, discovered her-

self to the affectionate old woman, and entreated to know if she could give them any account of Sebastian or his companions?

"I have not seen signior Sebastian, or any one belonging to him, since last I beheld you, dear donna," replied the still trembling Teresa. "I was imprisoned by that fiend Garcias to torment you, sweet lady; and not till after your escape was I liberated. One captive only has been brought hither since your escape; but that was a lady, poor thing! young, and almost as beautiful as you are."

"Matilda!" exclaimed Victoria in pitiable agitation: "Matilda! was it not? Oh! speak, dearest Teresa, and tell us where to find her!"

"Alas! I know not: for Don Manuel in a fit of rage at her wayward humour (for she was not like you in temper) dragged her from the library three days ago, and I never beheld her, never heard of her since."

Victoria in silent sorrow dropped the fast-flowing tears of pity, grief, and disappointment upon the bosom of the sympathising Octavia; whilst Diego eagerly demanded,

if Don Manuel had disappeared at the same time?

"Oh, no:" she replied. "He supped here but last night; and about twelve we were all dismayed and astounded by that subterraneous thunder, ever of horrid omen. But last night it sounded, I thought, more dreadful than I had ever heard it; and, almost frantic with fear, I rushed after Juan into the great hall at the moment a tall spectre, clad in black flowing robes, enveloped in blue flames, glided into the parlour to my master. I beheld no more: for overcome by terror I fell into a swoon, and on my recovery from it found myself in this room, from whence I have not dared to move."

Further inquiries were now prevented by the sound of loud huzzas re-echoing through the dome of the hall. The tide of new-raised hope rushing through Victoria's heart was almost too powerful for her to bear; and she sickened with joyful expectation as the noise, approaching, issued from the library, when she perfectly recognised the voice of Thomas shouting above the rest, in all the ecstasy of enthusiastic joy. Assured

now, beyond all doubt, that Urbino was found, and that in one moment more she should behold him, a thrill of modest shame trembled through her agitated bosom, blushing for the unequivocal proofs of affection her conduct had evinced for a man she believed now for ever devoted to another. She drew her cowl over her face to hide her burning blushes; she wished herself at St. Marguerite's, or even with Ursuline and Roselia, until an idea suggested itself which she eagerly cherished. "May not all I have done be attributed to gratitude? Oh! it surely may; for Urbino did more for me." Then starting from Octavia's arms, and throwing back the cowl, she darted forward to welcome Urbino to liberty and life, as Thomas entered the room bellowing with joyful triumph, and dancing in the most grotesque manner some steps of a hornpipe he had learned in England when a boy, to the great risk and alarm of the venerable Anselmo, whom he bore on his shoulders, which he now heaved up and down like the undulating billows of his own element.

"Hoist every flag, for joy has boarded us," cried he vociferously. "Part of our precious convoy retaken.—Found the poor shattered hulk in the gulf of limbo! D—n my eyes if ever I was so afloat with glee! So I heaved the old vessel up, and bore away as fast as the wind and tide of joy could drift me, to cast all the cares on board the lady Victoria to the devil who made them. So now let the dear, kind, little fluttering heart of her stand off for the harbour of peace and rest; for the remainder of our glorious fleet cannot be much abaft. So, do you see, I'll be getting under weigh to cruise for them, now I know their course." And away Thomas strode, singing, or rather roaring, an old English sea ballad, leaving Victoria ashamed of her inhumanity. She could not rejoice as she felt she ought to rejoice on beholding the good Anselmo, who had been kind to her in the hour of distress, rescued from misery and bondage. But the dearest hope of her life his appearance had disappointed; and she felt almost angry, almost envious of the favour of Heaven thus partially shown to him; for a moment con-

ceiving that his good fortune was injuring Urbino. But these ideas were only momentary: she blushed for human nature, and, shuddering at her own presumption, invoked the forgiveness of unerring Heaven; and bursting into tears of penitence, pressed the old man's cold and trembling hand to her lips, and with all the cordiality of genuine satisfaction welcomed his restoration to liberty and happiness.

The immediate realising of Victoria's new-raised hope was disappointed by the appearance of Anselmo; but yet the flattering soother still whispered to her throbbing heart firm faith in the predictions of Thomas. But too soon this hope was taught to glow with less confidence, since the pious Anselmo could give no intelligence of his hapless companions. They had been together dragged from the goatherd's cot; but when they entered the subterraneous passages of the castle he was separated from conte Urbino and Sebastian, and conveyed to that noisome dungeon, from whence the Inquisition had, through the mercy of Heaven, liberated him; nor during his mise-

rable captivity had he been able to obtain any tidings of these his lamented friends.

The wreath of hope that had twined itself round Victoria's heart, and had each hour been putting forth new blossoms since she entered Catalonia, now was blighted, bud by bud, as new moments passed away; and at length withered in the ungenial soil of disappointment and despair, when, towards the close of day, every known spot of the castle, its grounds, ramparts, and the shipping belonging to it, had undergone the most minute scrutiny, and, although many wretched victims were found in the most secret prisons, neither Urbino, Sebastian, nor Matilda could be traced. Victoria had herself, to the amazement of Thomas and Diego, led the officials into the church, every part of which was examined with as much eagerness and care as if the lives of all depended upon finding those they sought; so much had the youth, beauty, and sweetness of manners, with the courage and affection our heroine had evinced in the pursuit of her husband, interested

every beholder. But no one could they find, or any communication between the church and any other place could they discover, except those Victoria was acquainted with. The great folding doors which she had hoped to escape by were with much labour and difficulty forced open; but through them they could not penetrate into the forest, time having raised barriers of trees and brambles, which, after the most determined exertions, were found impassable.

This investigation of the church deeply probed by tender remembrance every bleeding wound in the bosom of Victoria to direst torture, and she returned to Sebastian's study the wan and woeful child of anguish. But though she found it was the universal opinion that those they sought were massacred, or removed from the castle, a strong and invincible persuasion arose in her mind that they were still concealed in some undiscovered prison, perishing for want of sustenance. And the more her friends wished to argue her out of this belief, the more bigoted she became to it; and vain was every

effort to dispel a thought that stood firm as her reliance upon Heaven; and fruitless also was every attempt to induce her to quit the castle, and rejoin signora Ursuline at Cadaques.

The inquisitors having much business to transact relative to the captives and property found there before they could depart, our heroine determined to remain as long as they did, and continue her agonising search; and father Anselmo, having in some degree imbibed her opinions and presentiment, prevailed upon the officials and her friends to offer no opposition but advice to her desire of staying. But as father Pierre and Octavia much wished her to quit a scene so torturing to her sensibility, and destructive to her peace, they failed not to avail themselves of the privilege of advising; and while they were strongly urging her departure, the same inquisitor who had so surprised Diego glided by her, softly saying, unheard by all but her——

"Quit not the castle until the fate of your husband is ascertained."

The arguments Victoria had before listened to without conviction now no longer arrested her attention; they talked unheard by her; for the inquisitor's words had given fresh tortures to her soul, since she doubted not but this mysterious man had some potent reason for his solemn mandate to her. And now every horror that cruelty could encompass Urbino with, arose in dreadful array to her terrified imagination. But, while her heart sickened with a load of anticipated ills, it, like Pandora's box, still contained hope lurking at the bottom; and eagerly she sought for and obtained an opportunity of speaking to this man of mystery unobserved.

"Tell me, I conjure you, tell me," she said, "have you reason to suppose Urbino is really in the castle?"

Cautiously he looked around before he answered, "I have."

"Oh! where? where?" she cried. "If the sweet beams of humanity e'er warmed your breast, delay not to tell me where."

"I have reason to believe that he is in

some secret prison of this infernal castle; but where, alas! I know not; yet am as anxious as yourself to find him."

Victoria's head sunk, overwhelmed by disappointment, on her bosom, which heaved convulsively with the pangs of sorrow. The inquisitor paused: at length he spoke—

"Have you sufficient love for Urbino, your gallant preserver, your suffering husband, to venture with me alone, and in the dead of night, unknown to any other mortal, to explore secret and dangerous places in search of him?"

"I have," said Victoria firmly, although shaken to the very vitals of sensibility.

"Then in the dead of night expect me:—but remember, if you reveal a syllable of what has passed between us, or impart to any one our meditated nocturnal search, your life and Urbino's shall be the forfeit of your imprudence." Then vanishing among the officials, Victoria beheld him no more that evening.

Supper was served for Victoria and her

immediate friends in the study of Sebastian; and influenced by the hopes her meditated nocturnal search inspired, she forced herself to take nourishment, with a view to sustain her through any toil she might have to encounter: and still assuring her friends she would not, for some days at least, depart from the castle, it was determined that Diego, with an escort, should the following morning proceed to Cadaques, to relieve the anxiety of signora Ursuline and Roselia relative to Victoria, and conduct them to her if they would venture to the castle.

It was while sitting after supper this evening that Victoria, wishing to preserve the firmness of her mind by diverting it from some doubts relative to the inquisitor, which, in despite of every effort to subdue were fast arising, requested Octavia to relate all that had occurred to her after her mysterious disappearance; and how she had been restored to life after wearing so dreadfully the semblance of death.

Octavia Bernini was a woman of strong understanding, and was gifted with a fa-

ency of language seldom equalled; but if her conversation had a fault, it was that of describing too minutely every event, and decking in all the flowers of rhetoric even the most trivial circumstances. Her narrative, consequently, was long and tedious, though eloquently delivered: therefore, for the sake of brevity, we will present it to our readers in our own simple unadorned language, as we have still to relate matters which we trust they will find more interesting; and also from the omniscious power which authorship possesses, we can relate both causes and effects, whilst the inferior knowledge of Octavia only allowed her to speak of the latter.

" Overpowered by a strong soporific, which had been mingled by Juan in her food, and of which both Victoria and Hero had partaken, Octavia did not awake until late in the morning, after her bed had been conveyed, by means of a sinking floor ingeniously contrived for such a purpose, from the apartment where Victoria slept into a small lumber-room beneath it. Her consternation and dismay were great, as may well be

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imagined, when she perceived what had been effected during her heavy sleep.

" Fears for her own immediate safety were soon dispelled on perceiving her baggage had been removed along with her; but the circumstance of her removal, and the mystery attending it, she instantly conceived portentous of impending evil to Victoria.

" In this melancholy prison, without employment and without society, she passed day after day, attended by a savage fear-inspiring ruffian, who in impenetrable silence regularly supplied her with food. At length, one day Garcias entered her prison, with a cup containing a liquid, which, notwithstanding her piteous entreaties and vehement struggles, he, aided by her jailor, forced her to drink. Believing that she had swallowed a deadly poison, she recommended her soul to Heaven, and threw herself upon her bed, where almost immediately she felt insensibility stealing over her faculties.

" The diabolical practices of Garcias had led him to an acquaintance with a drug which gave to the human frame the ap-

pearance of death for some hours after it was taken; and to weak constitutions he had often found it prove fatal: but to him that was no impediment to the use of it whenever he required its assistance.

"In as short a time as he expected, the respiration of Octavia became imperceptible; her joints stiffened, her complexion assumed a cadaverous hue, and the chill of death sat on the surface of her body: and in this state, clad in a shroud, and disfigured with gore in representation of ghastly wounds, she was conveyed to the bed where our affrighted heroine discovered her. In her struggles against swallowing the nauseous potion, some of it was lost: its power did not continue so long, therefore, as Garcias expected, and its dreadful influence began to recede from her heart at the moment her deadly groans appalled Victoria.

"Severe were the sufferings of Octavia whilst the power of the noxious drug was evaporating; but her moans disturbing conte Vicenza, who lay ill of his wound in the other bed, she was conveyed back to her prison; and many days elapsed before she

could leave her bed, and many more before she was perfectly recovered from the effect of the somniferous draught. At length, when her feelings were quite restored to their natural energy, she was removed by the hand of wanton cruelty to that noisome dungeon from whence the power of the Inquisition had set her free."

CHAP. IV.

The prolixity of Octavia's narrative retarded its termination to a late hour; and as her auditors had undergone much bodily and mental fatigue during the last twenty-four hours, they, soon after she concluded, retired to their different apartments;—our heroine and Octavia occupying the chamber of Sebastian; Teresa and a female captive that of Theodore; while Diego and Thomas made beds for themselves in the library, close to the door of Sebastian's study, that they might protect through the night her whom they both considered themselves bound to guard from every danger, even at the hazard of their lives.

Signora Octavia's disposition was of that firm cast, that would not suffer itself to be agitated by excess of sensibility: her passions were, unless violently attacked by grief, ever in strict discipline, and in obedience to the regularity of her mental ar-

rangements: she felt not with acuteness, destructive to repose, the sudden transition from despair to happiness. Her mind now calm in the sweet sunshine of restored tranquillity, she, after a pious thanksgiving to Heaven for its late mercy vouchsafed to her, sunk into a profound sleep, full of pure but serene joy, in the soothing hope of soon beholding her beloved husband and children; while our agitated heroine, a prey to agonising uncertainty and apprehension for the fate of him dearer to her than her own existence, sought not her pillow, where she knew sleep, however wooed, would not "weigh her eyelids down," or "steep her senses in forgetfulness." But in all her sorrows and perplexities, her thoughts flew up to heaven for counsel and protection. Now, therefore, unseen by mortal eye, she supplicated for the aid of her Creator in her present anxious undertaking, and fervently implored his divine protection for Urbino and Sebastian. Time flew unheeded in this her serious employment, until the castle clock tolling the hour of one roused

her from her knees, with the recollection of her promise to the mysterious inquisitor.

It was now the dead of night, but he had appointed no place or hour for meeting. Urbino might fall a victim to this unpardonable neglect. Victoria's soul sickened with torturing apprehension, and she instantly resolved to explore the library, where she knew not Diego and Thomas were keeping vigil, with a hope of meeting the inquisitor.

"And should you meet him, will you dare to venture alone with him, all mystery as he is?" whispered trembling fear.

"Whilst the shadow of a hope exists of my finding Urbino, I would dare to venture in quest of him, even with villany confessed," answered her throbbing heart, glowing with animated gratitude and affection: but her frame shivered with the nervous chill of apprehension and fatigue; which, with the extreme cold of the night, induced her to wrap herself up closely in the sacerdotal habit she wore: and, taking a light, she softly opened the door into Sebastian's

study, and beheld the inquisitor seated at a table there, with a lanthorn and basket lying by him. On seeing Victoria, he arose and approached her.

"I almost despaired of your coming," said he in a cautious whisper.

"You appointed no hour or place for meeting," Victoria faltering replied; dismayed at the time, the place, the mystery of this meeting; with the inquisitor wearing his hood, overshadowing his face so much as to preclude all possibility of catching the smallest glimpse of his countenance.

"Your coming at all," said the incognito, "discovers that intrepidity in you which I hoped to find. But dare you, lady Victoria, at this hour, and unknown to you as I am, dare you venture alone with me, upon an enterprise that must expose you to many horrors, and possibly dangers? although I am, as you see, well armed to defend us both (here, throwing open his robe, he showed pistols fixed in his belt). This scheme is my last hope for the discovery and preservation of Urbino; and without

your aid I cannot effect it. My hope is justly founded; yet it may fail: when, alas, alas! the most amiable, the most glorious youth that ever ornamented the world will too surely fall a victim to diabolical relentless vengeance."

Every fibre of Victoria's soul was tortured now by direst anguish at this dreadful alternative. The stranger's voice discovered such tones of tenderness and sympathy in his last sentence, that, accepting the sounds as bonds of faith, suspicion vanished; while the horrors that hung round Urbino inspired her with augmenting courage, which urged her on to attempt his rescue at the hazard of every evil that might befal herself, and firmly she said—

"I dare venture with you. Affection and gratitude will lead me, undauntedly, through every horror and every danger that can assail me; since the shadow of a hope exists, that through these perils and terrors we may be led to rescue Urbino from destruction."

"Will gratitude and affection," the inquisitor asked, "teach you submission to my now placing a bandage over your eyes;

since by the most solemn oaths am I bound never to discover some secret passages through which we must pass before we can reach our place of destination? But short will be this deprivation of sight, as these secret places are near at hand."

"Urbino has done more for me," said Victoria in the energetic tone of enthusiastic gratitude, throwing back her cowl for the accommodation of the bandage, which the inquisitor hastily placed over her eyes: then taking her hand, she felt his cold as death, and horribly convulsed by dreadful agitation. Instantly she caught alarm: but it was too late to recede; and rallying her courage, she suffered him to lead her on. For several paces he conducted her over level ground, stopping only twice, as if to open doors or places of entrance. At length, making a full pause, he stamped with his feet, and instantly the place on which they stood sunk rapidly about two fathoms. He then lifted her off the platform on which they had descended; and which, by the noise that immediately ensued, Victoria concluded arose to its original station.

Her heart now palpitated high with alarm of treachery; and the incognito taking the bandage from her eyes, she found herself at the entrance of a low winding arcade formed by nature through a long chain of rocks. And now she saw her mysterious guide approach a cavity in the rock, where she was surprised to behold a number of torches deposited; two of which he took; and lighting them by his lantern (which he then fastened to his belt) he gave one to Victoria to bear; and, carrying the other himself, proceeded through the arcade; the winding path of which was in many places extremely slippery, owing to the tide reaching it at high water.

At length they passed through the arcade; and our agitated heroine found herself in an immense black cavern; along the rugged bed of which an inlet of the sea foamed impetuously, sounding with horrid din as it rapidly dashed itself from rock to rock. The torches emitted their glaring beams not half way through this enormous place; but, casting their light in liquid brightness upon the black torrent beneath,

officiously reminded Victoria of her dreadful entrance into Don Manuel's castle.

Appalled by her situation, and all the past horrors busy memory huddled together in terrible array, as hideous sprites to blast her courage, her trembling limbs refused to bear her further—she stopped—she panted for breath—a cold dew overspread her forehead—a murmur of supplication for mercy from the inquisitor was faltering on her lips, when the fate of Urbino arrested every selfish thought, replenished the dying lamp of courage in her heart, thrilled energy through her veins, gave confidence to her soul, and to her feet a firm undaunted step.

In a moment more, the inquisitor, exhorting her to summon every particle of resolution she could command to aid her through their anxious enterprise, led the way up a steep acclivity, that wound along the side of the cavern in a variety of directions. At length they reached the summit; where nature, in some capricious moment, had thrown out huge masses of rock, forming a bridge across the cavern nearly two hundred feet above the surface of the water;

and of such extraordinary formation, it seemed to have no base; but appeared as if large fragments of rock hung in one large consolidated body, suspended in the air by the power of gravitation.

It required every effort of our heroine's renovated courage to impel her following her guide upon this apparently baseless fabric; from whence, as she looked upon the gulf beneath, her head became giddy, and her senses sickened with direst apprehension.

They however safely reached the termination of the bridge, and, cautiously stepping across the chasm which separated it from the path they were to take, began a winding descent on the other side of the cavern; when soon, in suddenly turning a very pointed projection of rock, a horrid sound struck upon Victoria's ears, partaking of a hideous yell and soul-harrowing moan. Her heart was appalled, and her knees trembled; yet she forbore to express her surprise or fears, still hoping her conductor would relieve both. But he was silent. As

they proceeded, the dreadful sounds of the howling of a wild beast and the groans of a human being, direfully mingled, increased most rapidly; and with these appalling sounds the noise of rattling chains assailed her ears: this was the severest blow her heart had yet received; she gasped for breath, her frame was convulsed, and, frantically grasping the inquisitor's arm, in the sharp tone of reason chasing despair she exclaimed:

"Oh, fellest agent of cruelty! is it to seek Urbino's mangled corse you bring me thus to the den of his ferocious devourers?"

"Lady Victoria," said the inquisitor mildly but impressively, "believe me not such a monster."

This short sentence at once dissipated her alarm, and stilled her dreadful agitation; for from his voice she distilled the balm of security and comfort, for its tones were those of pity: and eagerly she now entreated pardon for her frantic conduct and injurious suspicions.

"The random arrows of terror and sor-

row can never be felt as shafts of offence: I therefore have nothing to pardon," said he coldly, walking on.

Descending now but slowly, owing to the extreme ruggedness of the path, it was some time before Victoria could discern any thing to account for these dismaying sounds, that still made her tremble. At length she distinctly beheld at the same side of the cavern, but at some distance below them, a creature of a most singular appearance moving with astonishing rapidity up and down a rugged space of about a dozen feet; sending forth in its movements fierce yells and groans of anguish, as if enraged and in despair at its unsuccessful efforts to break the ponderous chain which bound it to the rock. At length the winding path brought Victoria and her guide as near this furiously agitated creature as safety would permit any one to approach, when every feeling of humanity was tortured by dreadful amazed commiseration at the horrid spectacle she saw—a creature, partaking in resemblance both of the human species and a quadruped, infuriated to the

direst pitch of phrensy that malady and hunger could excite. Its head was like that of a man, covered with long black matted hair; but it moved on all its limbs, like a quadruped; and its body was enveloped in fur.

The inquisitor stopped, and for a moment looked in horrid silence upon the dreadful object; and then loudly, though in a tone of pity, exclaimed—

"Sanguinario! Poor Sanguinario!"

The wretched creature instantly ceased its rapid motion; and, erecting its body, Victoria, shuddering, beheld clad in fur a human being before her, who was suffering under all the direful horrors of lycanthropy. He howled no more; but his moans, so woe-fraught, were insupportable to humanity. Victoria's heart bled with anguish at the sound. He raised his burning hands, in supplication for food, in a manner so expressive of his misery, that Victoria burst into tears: and the inquisitor, taking from the basket he carried a large piece of meat, flung it to the wretched sufferer; whose shrieks of joy so much subdued Victoria,

she was forced to catch the inquisitor's arm, and cling to it, to support her almost convulsed frame. But though she had not power to articulate her wishes, the inquisitor seemed perfectly to comprehend them; for, instantly taking her hand, he quickly turned into a cavity or kind of labyrinthian grotto in the rock; from whence, as they were proceeding up a short but remarkably steep acclivity, Victoria suddenly heard a loud clash of the wretched maniac's chain, succeeded by a dreadful yell, and sounds of both were quickly repeated nearer and still nearer: and little doubting that this miserable and terrifying being had broken from confinement, and was then pursuing them, she uttered an involuntary shriek; which was instantly reiterated, in several different-toned voices, as if in derision of her.

Trembling with horror and dismay, Victoria grasped the hand of her conductor; who turning to see the cause of her alarm, not appearing to have heard it, her torch gleamed upon the lower part of his face,

his situation above her giving a full view of that. His hood still concealed his eyes and forehead from sight; but she beheld sufficient to awaken every dormant fear, and to tell her anticipating heart that destruction awaited her; since a more darkly, diabolical, treacherous, and vindictive expression of countenance she had never before seen—no, not even in Garcias or Maratti.

Dreadful were now our heroine's sensations; but escape was impossible, and resistance vain.

"Fear not!" said her conductor as he led her up another step.

"Fear not!" was gently repeated by a voice close behind her. In amazement she turned around, but no one could she see.

"Remember Urbino, and be firm!" said the inquisitor, still moving onward.

"Remember Urbino, and be firm!" was repeated in a voice like thunder from above, and reiterated in lessening tones until it died away in a cadence most soft and piteous.

Victoria, dismayed, had not power to combat with superstitious fears; and, still believing her conductor was leading her to destruction, devoutly recommended her soul to Heaven, as she with tremulous steps moved on.

This man of mystery at length conducted our terror-struck heroine through a small cavern to a low black door, at which they stopped; and no sooner did their torches gleam upon it, than Victoria distinctly beheld written upon it in strange-formed characters of variegated colours and flaming brightness,

"THE CHAMBER OF DEATH!"

The incognito struck forcibly against the door; a deep groan was heard. The inquisitor paused—then knocked again: a groan more deep and hollow than the former assailed their ears. Again her guide paused—again he struck the door, and slowly it receded as a passing-bell struck up, tolling most heavily for a few moments; when ceasing, the swelling notes of an organ were distinctly heard, accompanying a fine-toned tenor voice, chanting, in solo, part of a

requiem for a departed sinner, and at a distance which prevented not every word from being clearly distinguished.

Awed and dismayed beyond conception, our trembling heroine followed the inquisitor into this dreadful chamber, which was formed of rocks black as jet, and where the most impenetrable darkness was broken only by the torches which they bore—Victoria's shaking in her hand, which had scarcely power to grasp it. The music at length ceased; and a sound was heard like a ponderous iron chain falling gradually; and in one moment more the rock at the east end of the chamber burst open with a horrid din, and discovered an immense shrine most dazzlingly illuminated, emitting rays like the rising luminary of day, on the sarcophagus of which appeared recumbent the almost colossal figure of a Spanish knight, armed cap-a-pee, in black armour; and ere Victoria's distracted faculties allowed her to take a complete survey of the scene before her, an awful trumpet sounded, and the knight, who seemed to her only a monumental figure, slowly arose from his

resting-place. In his casque nodded an immense plume of black feathers: in one hand he bore an enormous sword; in the other a shield emblazoned with the emblems of death. Majestically he descended from the shrine, and advanced a few paces towards the inquisitor and our amazed and terror-struck heroine; when raising his sword arm, a stream of blood gushed from it, and instantly the arm fell as if suddenly deprived of motion; and immediately his armour dropped off with a crash, and discovered the figure of Death bearing an uplifted dart; and at the same moment the inquisitor fell motionless to the ground, and our dismayed heroine with increased amazement beheld in the same instant the hideous phantom sink from her view.

CHAP. V.

VICTORIA's faculties were now in wildest tumult: she knew not what to believe, except the certainty of divine omnipresence; or what to doubt, but the stability of her own mind, which she now found so dreadfully shaken that she feared its final overthrow; and her first effort was to save that upon which all depended, by invoking the protection of the power that now only could avail her. Instantly she dropped upon her knees, and fervently prayed to heaven for succour, and for a restoration of her mental strength, which the influence of delusion was mining fast. Pure was her piety, and her petitions were not offered in vain. The divine influence she implored pervaded her whole soul; the terrors of superstition vanished; she arose from her knees undaunted; and in the moment when her situation called for all the powers of her

mind she found them in fullest force collected.

Doubtful now if her mysterious guide were really dead, or only in a fit, all that might occur in either case passed rapidly through her imagination; and in either case destruction to her seemed equally inevitable. Could she retrace the dreadful and intricate path the inquisitor had led her thither by, it could avail her nothing, unacquainted as she was with the secrets of the way that precipitated them into these horrid caverns; and should she remain where she was, she should alike expose herself to the perils attendant upon the inquisitor's possible recovery, and to the power of those by whose means she doubted not all the horrors she had witnessed were effected. To penetrate further on seemed now her only resource; she had no other means of escape: and through unexplored ways, although she had every thing to fear, conviction had not arisen to tell her she had nothing to hope. It was to seek Urbino she had entered the caverns; and now, with only Heaven for her guide, might she not, in seeking for escape, be con-

ducted to his prison? This idea no sooner entered her mind than it took total possession of it, and with all the energy of enthusiastic hope she prepared for the bold and arduous enterprise.

Around Victoria now looked with an eagerly-inquiring eye: the shrine seemed to have lost half its brilliancy; but to her infinite joy she beheld a door opposite to that they had entered by, and through it she immediately determined upon attempting to go, but first wished to possess herself of the inquisitor's torch, which had been extinguished in his fall, and also of his pistols, to save herself, in case of his recovery and pursuit of her, from that fate she had for some time thought he meant them to inflict: yet as she was hastily taking possession of his torch, she found that vital warmth glowed in the hand which held it; and as she might be mistaken in the opinion she had formed of him,—and, even if she were not, still considering him a fellow-creature,—she would not deprive him of the only means of saving himself, but left him his lantern to guide him. Having with a fearful hand placed his pistols in her

belt, she devoutly consigned herself to the protection of Heaven, and, hastening to the door, found it opened upon a short flight of steps, at the foot of which was another door, which she found no difficulty in opening, and through it she entered into a narrow and not very long passage: but no sooner did she do so than a most dreadful fetid smell struck her loathing senses, and she would have retreated even to the black chamber, only she found it impossible to open the last door she had passed through, which had closed after her by a spring, the secret of which she could by no means discover. To proceed was therefore inevitable; and she was led on by a hope of soon escaping from the horrid stench: but in that she was deceived; for no sooner did she unclose another door, which terminated the passage, than she found herself almost stifled by an increase of the pestiferous effluvia.

To a pitiable dilemma Victoria now found herself reduced: to remain in the passage was impossible, and to proceed threatened destruction: yet, should she

escape suffocation, her wanderings might soon lead her into a less noxious atmosphere. She thought of lighting the other torch, but was compelled to give up the idea from the impossibility of carrying it lighted, wanting as she should one hand at liberty to open and shut the doors she might meet with. Praying fervently as she advanced, she summoned sufficient resolution to pass through this door, and encounter in fullest force the noisome air which seemed every moment about to stop her breath. From this door was a short descent into an immense vault; where Victoria no sooner found herself than horror in its most horrible shape almost annihilated her tortured faculties, since she was, as she rightly conjectured, in the dreadful repository of the mangled corses of her murdered fellow-creatures. Frantically she retreated into the passage, and there for a few moments stood clinging to the door-case in breathless dismay.

At length an idea most horrible presented itself to her terror-struck mind. Perhaps Heaven had conducted her thither to

find the mangled corse of Urbino, to breathe by his side her last sigh in prayer for the repose of his soul. Instantly she precipitated herself into this dreadful sepulchre. This was the most soul-harrowing moment of Victoria's life; but, horrible as the idea was which now monopolised every tortured faculty, it spared her humanity the heart-rending anguish which reflexion else would have inflicted, as she passed by heaps of the human species mouldering there, deprived of life and the rites of burial by the sanguinary assassin's hand; and while wading through a slimy soil which coward fancy else would have pourtrayed to her as moistened by human blood, happily the thoughts of how many widows and orphans, of how many parents of child bereft, had deplored the corses there, struck not once her susceptible heart. But whenever a newly-butchered body, clad in the smallest degree like Urbino or Sebastian, struck her wild inquiring eye, in all the phrensy of apprehensive horror she gleamed her torch upon the pallid countenance; and convulsive was the bound of her agitated

heart when freed from the fell grasp of anticipating horror, on each time beholding features perfectly unknown to her.

At length this direful examination was finished—not according to Victoria's expectations, but to her wishes; and reaching the termination of this soul-harrowing repository, she rushed up three or four broad steps, pushed open a folding door, and ran, nay almost flew, along a narrow winding passage; from which she was just emerging into a sort of cavern, when she stumbled over the breathless body of a man cold as marble, and in her fall her torch was extinguished.

CHAP. VI.

It is impossible for the feeble historian now to delineate the feelings of Victoria. But firmly persuaded this body was Urbino's, she raised her eyes to pray Heaven instantly to receive her last sighs, when—oh! gentle sympathising reader! if Victoria has yet interested you, will you not rejoice?—she beheld a gleam of light emanating through some chinks in the rocks a little distance above her. With the speed of a doe she scrambled to the place, which, to her inexpressible rapture, she discovered contained a door; which without hesitation she pushed in, and entered a small and singular kind of apartment, of a pyramidical form, in the centre of which a lamp was burning upon a stone table. Wildly Victoria snatched up the lamp; and, in turning to go out, first perceived that in one corner of this chamber, on a matted couch, lay extended

a human figure wrapped in a sacerdotal robe.—Could this be Urbino?—Her heart dilated with new-raised hope. She bounded to the couch; and to her utter amazement beheld, in an uneasy slumber, the identical being whose apparently supernatural appearance in the library had relieved her from the grasp of Garcias the third morning of her captivity.

Cruel disappointment to her hopes struck heavily upon her heart; but, her soul on the wing to learn if her dreadful fears were just, she flew back to the corse, and found it was that of a person unknown to her. Grateful to Heaven for this great mercy, she took up her extinguished torch, and returned to the place where she had seen the sleeping man, resolving to disclose her situation to him, and to implore his pity and protection.

On re-entering his chamber, she found the venerable man raised a little on his elbow, the approach of death strongly pourtrayed in his emaciated and woe-worn countenance. The vanishing of the light had dissipated his slumber; and on Victoria's

returning with it, by some sudden effort of expiring nature he was enabled to sit up erect; and devoutly clasping a crucifix which he held in his feeble hands—

"Heaven, I thank thee!" he exclaimed in a faltering and hollow tone—"I thank thee for directing the footsteps of this holy man to the death-bed of thy true penitent! Reverend father, you behold in me the most consummate sinner that ever offended against Heaven. I have insulted my Creator by the commission of crimes that even fiends might shrink from! Yet in this my last hour no death-bed horrors encompass me; since, firm in faith, I trust that years spent in the most sincere contrition that ever agonised the heart of man have expunged from the records of heaven the fell catalogue of my black crimes. But ere you proceed to give your benediction, or strengthen my fleeting soul in hope, let me make all the atonement now in my power to those whom I have most injured." He here drew a packet from his bosom, and, presenting it to our awed and amazed heroine, proceeded.

" As you consider your holy vow sacred, and as your soul hopes to taste the pure joys of Paradise in the presence of your beneficent Creator, of your blessed Redeemer, conceal this packet from every individual in the world, until Heaven permits you to deliver it as directed! If you love justice, if you estimate virtue, immediately seek out the injured youth to whom it is addressed! As you hope to prosper here and be blessed hereafter, be faithful to the sacred trust confided to you! and believe that Almighty Providence itself consigns to your chosen hands the fate of my injured friend and benefactor's child, of him the world now call conte di Urbino."

" Urbino!" half shrieking cried Victoria, catching the death-clad hand of the agitated man—" do you then know the fate of conte Urbino?"

Her voice seemed to have a powerful effect upon the dying man; for, shrinking from her grasp, he sunk back on the couch in a swoon. Victoria strove to recall his fleeting senses by the aid of some salts she had in her pocket; and he had just

opened his wistful eyes once more upon the world, when, to Victoria's utter dismay, the inquisitor entered the chamber, guided by the lantern she had left with him.

" You have anticipated me in coming hither," said he haughtily to her.

The moment the inquisitor spoke, the dying man, with a universal convulsive shiver, eagerly exclaimed, " From him, above all the world, I conjure thee, conceal what I have entrusted to thee !"

" What say you ?" said the inquisitor in a tone of fierce alarm and imperious interrogation.

" From the imbecility of sickness, and from my being clad in a sacerdotal habit," replied Victoria, " he mistakes me, I suppose, for his confessor."

The dying man pressed Victoria's hand in gratitude and approbation ; while the inquisitor, hastily advancing, with the wild gestures of phrensied menace exclaimed :—

" Wretch ! infernal miscreant ! what have you dared to confess ? Diabolical villain ! accursed fiend ! you who plunged me into the gulf of iniquity, and gave to me

all of misery my life has known, have you basely deserted me? Have you sacrificed me in your pusillanimous confessions? Whom have you been glossing over your own black crimes to, by implicating others? Speak, miscreant! or I will crush you to atoms in my just vengeance!"

Victoria, shocked and alarmed for the safety of the feeble penitent, started from her support of him, and, pointing to the pistols in her belt, undauntedly addressed the infuriated inquisitor.

"We have you in our power, you see. Advance no further, intemperate man. Disturb not with phrensied threats the last sacred moments of the dying. Question with calmness, and you will be answered by sincerity."

The inquisitor retreated a few paces, and, raising his hood a little, seemed to regard her for some moments with attentive amazement before he articulated—

"Extraordinary young creature! you almost impel me to forgive your being the destroyer of Urbino."

"Me the destroyer of Urbino!" exclaim-

ed Victoria, half shrieking with horror ineffable.

"Had he never beheld thy fatal, fatal charms—had he never witnessed thy accursed fascinations, he had now been safe at the château of conte Vicenza! Was it not to rescue you from destruction the gallant and ill-fated youth came after you to this infernal castle, and persuaded me to enter into his romantic, his dangerous schemes? For you he brought the vengeance of conte Vicenza and his diabolical confederates on him; and for you he is now probably suffering all the calamities, all the tortures that dæmoniac cruelty can inflict."

Victoria burst into a convulsive passion of tears, which saved her from fainting.

"Say, what horrors do you allude to?" exclaimed the dying penitent in dreadful agitation. "What calamity has befallen the precious boy? Speak! I entreat, I implore you! Bury animosities in this awful moment, I conjure you, and tell me, tell me all you know of him, Francisco!"

"Francisco!" said Victoria in amaze and joy. "Suspicion is then no more. You pro-

tected Urbino—you befriended me. You will not, I am persuaded, however agitated by tumultuous passions, harm this dying man, or injure me: and your arms, therefore, I should blush at retaining longer in my possession." And now advancing towards the inquisitor, she gracefully restored his pistols to him.

"You have conquered, lady Victoria! and were concealment longer in my power, I should consider it unjust to generosity like yours," said this man of mystery, throwing back his cowl, and discovering to our astonished heroine the features of the identical old man who had entered her chamber through the secret passage from the church, to rescue the lovely Matilda. And no sooner was his entire countenance displayed, than suspicion received a considerable check; since the villany his overshadowed visage indicated was now firmly contradicted by the ingenuousness that sat conspicuous on his brow, and by the mild expression which now beamed from his quick and penetrating eyes. But in the subsequent part of this interview Victoria beheld, in his va-

rying countenance, such unequivocal expression of almost every passion which could disgrace or ornament the human mind, that she doubted not but his heart was the repository of the extremes of virtue and of vice.

"I am Francisco," he continued, "and you now know, lady Victoria, that my life is at your mercy: but I dare confide in your prudence and generosity. Hurried on by the phrensy of despair for the unknown fate of Urbino, I allured you hither, though I knew not but destruction awaited us from some of Don Manuel's people. I trusted that the resistless charms of your youth, your beauty, your fascination of voice and manner, added to the singular proofs you have given of gratitude and attachment to my dear boy, would melt the hitherto impenetrable heart of this man, whom I once called friend, and win him into breaking an oath rashly given to Don Manuel of concealing from me some secret places in this castle: and had your influence failed, much I fear my desperation would have led me on to sacrifice you both to my vengeance;

and as you have disarmed my heart of its phrensy, so I trust you have subdued the contumacy of conte Elfridii; and that he will no longer scruple to make all the atonement now in his power for his past offences, by imparting instantly to us every secret which can yield a hope of leading us to Urbino, who is, I am firmly persuaded, now confined in some infernal den, where even the power of the Inquisition cannot penetrate."

"Oh, dear suffering child of her I murdered, what sad tidings do I hear!" exclaimed the penitent conte in all the anguish of deep-wrought despair. "Yes, Francisco, I have lived to feel convinced that Heaven will not enrol in the pages of guilt the breach of oaths which bind us to the vicious.—Lead me—lead me then on, Francisco, as far as my stiffening limbs and fleeting breath can carry me."

With that appearance of renovated strength which energy from zeal supplied, the agitated penitent arose from his couch, supported by Francisco and Victoria, taught them to open a secret sliding pannel in his

chamber, and entered with them through it into a narrow passage. But it was the last flash of the expiring lamp of life. His supporters soon saw, with grief unutterable, the folly of the attempt; they bore him back to his couch, where in a few moments after he expired,—and with him every clue by which they hoped to have been led to the prison of Urbino.

The despair of Francisco exceeded all bounds of reason and piety: he breathed forth the most dreadful anathemas against the pale corse before him; imprecated his own existence and his crimes; flung himself upon the ground with the fury of a maniac; tore out handfuls of his hoary hair; and writhed about in all the wild phrensy of ungoverned despair.

Victoria's anguish was not less poignant; but hers was the sorrow of a Christian. It struck every fibre of sensibility with the fellest blows of soul-harrowing affliction: but with sadly silent uncomplaining grief she bore her misery; for, remembering whose hand had plucked the sweet floweret of happiness from her heart, she bowed in reve-

rential meek submission; and so beautifully touching appeared the light and shade of pious resignation and heart-rending sorrow that diffused themselves over every line of her interesting countenance, that Francisco, struck by its fascinating eloquence, blushed at his own conduct; and, rallying all the good properties of his mind, soon, from the power of such a pure example, felt the influence of Christian fortitude, stealing from misery its fellest pangs, and breathing its mellifluent balm upon his sorrows.

Heaven too beheld Victoria, approved and pitied. The wanderer Hope was remanded back to its soothing station in her breast; suddenly her senses awakened upon new projects; hastily she snatched up her torch, and, lighting it, said firmly to Francisco—

"By the deceased conte's having discovered yon passage to us, in compliance with your wish of participating with him in all the secrets of this castle, we must naturally conclude that through yon passage you would have been conducted to the spot probably of the most importance. Let us then pursue the path of Hope which Providence

seems to have opened to us; and, guided by all-pitying Heaven, our attempt may be crowned with the blessing of success."

Francisco started from the ground, animated by a cheering ray of that hope which now thrilled through every fibre of her frame; and with all the zeal of ardent fond solicitude they re-entered the passage, exploring every spot of it with the wistful scrutiny their painful solicitude forcibly prompted. This passage led them several hundred feet from the chamber of the deceased penitent, to a narrow cylindrical staircase, which they hastily ascended; and, after mounting innumerable steps, at length reached a door, which without difficulty Francisco opened, being well acquainted with the nature of the lock which fastened it; and on passing through the door, they found themselves in a room ornamented with a number of statues; in fact, the very apartment Juan had informed Victoria and her terrified companions was the anatomy chamber.

Francisco was dreadfully disappointed and chagrined on finding their search ter-

minate in a room which had the preceding morning undergone the most minute scrutiny, from Diego's having informed the officials of its being a chamber where many unfortunate captives had been conveyed to, and never been heard of more.

" And from that very mysterious circumstance," said Victoria, " as well as from this room being evidently the first place thought of by the poor deceased penitent, have we not just reason to conjecture some undeveloped secret is attached to it?"

Francisco considered her suggestions conclusive, and they were about to renew the scrutiny, when the castle clock struck five.

" We must instantly separate," said Francisco; " and you must now only appear to know me as an inquisitor: you can easily conceive the fatal consequences that must ensue to me were it discovered that I had any knowledge of this castle, and concealed it from the august synod of which I am a member."

" You may place implicit confidence in my faith and prudence," replied Victoria;

" but when, when shall we renew our anxious search?"

" By the time my brothers assemble," said Francisco, " I shall have framed some plea for having this apartment more minutely scrutinised; and should our anxious wishes not be gratified during this day, we will meet again at night to investigate the passage once again, and to examine conte Elfridii's chamber for papers that may yield the discovery we pant for."

The packet confided to Victoria's care, as it was only to be delivered to Urbino, could afford no clue to his present fate; and as from Francisco she was particularly to conceal the solemn deposit, she mentioned it not of course.

Francisco continued—" Should no attempt of ours succeed, the castle shall be rased; but much time must necessarily elapse before that laborious undertaking can be accomplished; and to save Urbino we can only hope from immediate effects. But I must now hasten to conduct you, by a private way, to your chamber, since Diego and Thomas have stationed themselves in

the library to guard you; and from their knowledge particularly I wish to conceal myself: after what they have done, I cannot but fear their perfidy, and wish them to believe that I absconded with the rest of the castle community."

Francisco now led our sad and agitated heroine through the castle vaults into some winding passages; from whence he safely conducted her into his own apartments, contiguous to Sebastian's; into whose study he hastily admitted her, and, giving her his parting benediction, cautiously closed the entrance after him.

CHAP. VII.

On returning to her chamber, Victoria found, to her infinite satisfaction, Octavia still buried in a profound sleep; and so completely subdued by fatigue was her own frame, and so dreadfully agitated was her mind, from all the shocks it had so recently sustained, that she sunk into the first seat she came to; and, giving free indulgence to a friendly shower of tears, found her agonised heart so much relieved by them, that she at length determined upon going to bed: where, about seven o'clock, from downright fatigue of mind and frame, "tired Nature's sweet restorer" for once lit on lids sullied by many tears. From her deep slumber Octavia took care not to disturb her; and keeping all around her in perfect stillness, the poor wearied Victoria slept until past eleven, when she heard that Diego was gone with fathers Anselmo, Pierre, Leonard, St. Romaine, and the principal offi-

cials, to attend a special meeting of the Inquisition at Cadaques, and that Thomas had therefore been deputed to go in Diego's stead, to convey intelligence to signora Farinelli and Roselia, and to conduct them to the castle. And while our heroine was making a hasty toilet, previous to the renewal of her anxious search, it occurred to her, that from the accounts Teresa could possibly give of Matilda might be collected some information of importance: she therefore entreated the good old woman, while she was going through the mock ceremony of breakfasting, to give her every particle of intelligence she could recollect relative to the beautiful Matilda; and Teresa, ever eager to oblige Victoria, instantly complied.

"In a few evenings after I was released from my dungeon," said Teresa, "as I was setting the parlour in order for supper, my master hastily entered, bearing in his arms a lady in a religious habit, who was in a swoon. He laid her upon a couch with great tenderness, although he appeared dreadfully agitated. I instantly fetched

water, and all the restoratives I could get, and my efforts for her recovery were at length crowned with success, and she opened a pair of eyes almost as beautiful as your own, donna; but their expression at that time was very wild. She sighed heavily, and, looking wistfully around her, beheld Don Manuel; when, uttering a piercing shriek, she relapsed into a swoon, out of which it was not in our power to recover her. My master now seemed almost distracted; and by what he then unguardedly said, I learned she was daughter to the very lady he had loved; and often he called upon her as the child of his adored but faithless some one—I forget the name.

"At length, seeming to recollect himself, he ordered me to summon Inigo, a surgeon, who was compelled to open a vein in one of her arms before she discovered any symptom of returning respiration. By order of Inigo she was instantly conveyed to bed; and I set up with her all night, during which I verily believe she never for one instant ceased weeping; and often I heard her call upbraidingly upon some one named

Urbino, as if he had forsaken her, and left her a prey to villany.

" At the very first dawn of day she would get up and dress herself, not suffering me to assist her; so much she seemed to fear and hate me, as belonging to Don Manuel. At seven I left her to go about my household business; and when I summoned her to breakfast, she haughtily and peremptorily refused to attend. On repeating this to Don Manuel he seemed much hurt, and desired me to inform her, if she would not breakfast with him, he would with her; upon which she condescended to go down: but without speaking to or taking the least notice of him, she sullenly flung herself into the first seat she came to. On Don Manuel's politely offering her a cup of chocolate, she knocked it out of his hand upon the floor; and while I was employed in wiping it up, my master, in evident mortification, said to her, ' This violence, Matilda, will avail you nothing, since you are now irrevocably in my power. Your adored Urbino, your invincible champion, has forsaken you, drawn from you by the

resistless charms of the most fascinating, the most truly amiable and interesting woman that *now* adorns the world. One woman only ever equalled her, and she forsook me as Urbino has abandoned you. Yes, Matilda, you now know what it is to be scorned and rejected. Victoria soon, very soon, taught inconstancy to your loved Urbino; while I, although I beheld with admiration unparalleled, and acknowledged with reverence almost idolatrous, her matchless perfections, stood firm in my attachment to you — an attachment which your mother sanctioned; for, in the fell moment of her fatal death, the angel gave you to my arms; a saint, a martyred saint, bequeathed you to me; and though you have long been basely estranged from my protection, death only now shall tear you from me! Urbino has abandoned you; Francisco, the false usurper of my right, is now many leagues off, gone on important business to the see of Rome. You are, therefore, wholly in my power; and not all your violence, your disdain, your tears, or supplications, shall prevent my making you mine irrevocably, or hinder

my fulfilling the will of your mother, or my endeavouring to inspire you with pity for the man whose fair prospects in life your mother blasted, whose happiness she wrested from him, and who, through her dereliction, was plunged into every error he has since committed !'

" Never shall I forget the sparkling fire which now flashed from her eyes; and starting from her seat, she seemed in soul and stature high as the castle towers; and in a tone of the most vehement indignation she exclaimed—

"' Dare not, vile traducer of innocence, to affirm that my mother ever beheld you with partiality, or bequeathed her child to such a fiend as you are! No, no; surely her pure soul recoiled from you and vice as I do now! But disappointed, ungoverned, and diabolical enmity leads you on, vindictive as you are, to wreak on me the vengeance you say you owe Francisco for protecting me. I know I am in your power; and, knowing you, know all I have to dread from villany unequaled. Put me to all the tortures which your barbarous heart can

think of; tear me piece-meal; but you shall not subdue my contempt and indignation, or teach my heart to feel any thing for you but what my tongue will ever glory in avowing as long as the power of articulation is spared to me—scorn, hatred, disgust, abhorrence, the most deadly, the most implacable!"

"You must wonder, donna, how I can remember all their fine sayings so well; but never can I forget one word; for they spoke so impressively, that all they said seemed stamped at once upon the memory.

"Don Manuel, trembling with rage, now ordered me to quit the room; and I was so afraid lest she should, by her ill-timed violence, exasperate him to kill her, that I loitered about the door for some moments; when I heard my master talking a great deal to her, first angrily, then tenderly: but all would not do, for not one word could he get from her in return.

"Several days passed away without any particular incident to mark it; Don Manuel striving to gain the donna's regard by treating her with the greatest respect

and tenderness, but to no effect. More sullen and disdainful she became, if possible, every hour; and in his absence she would weep and lament so bitterly, and give herself up so totally to despair, that I trembled for the consequence; and used to be ever on the watch, lest the phrensy of her grief should precipitate her into her eternal destruction. Sometimes she would fervently pray to Heaven for protection: but in doing so, it seemed to me more from a conviction that it was right to do it, than from any confidence she had in prayers proving of much advantage, since she never arose from her knees with that sweet smile of Christian resignation that I have observed in you, donna. Either her sorrows were greater than yours, or her heart less compliant to the will of Heaven. Poor young creature! the only consolation she seemed to have was from a gold chain which hung round her neck, which she would kiss and cry over for hours together: and when I became less hateful to her, she told me the picture of a very dear friend had hung to it, but which, by some strange mystery,

she had lost from her pocket very shortly after he had sent it to her from Madrid. I think it was conte Urbino's picture; and the loss of it, she said, had greatly grieved her."

Victoria blushed, and felt very much distressed that she had, though innocently, augmented the sorrows of the afflicted. Teresa continued—

"In her moments of anguish she would seem to upbraid this conte Urbino for having left her; although when Don Manuel (and he appeared to take a malicious pleasure in doing it) would tauntingly remind her of Urbino's inconstancy, she would dart such looks of scorn and triumph at him, that I could not tell what to make out of them.

"At length that harbinger of mischief, Garcias, appeared, from whose long absence Don Manuel had been made uneasy: but he and his vile crew, by some effort of Belzebub's, escaped from shipwreck, and returned swearing vengeance against Diego and Urbino, who I now found was that sweet-mannered black Hippolyto; for I

heard Don Manuel tell Garcias so, and that Donna Matilda had made the discovery, in the anguish of her heart, on her first falling into my master's hands. But the news of yours and conte Urbino's escape from Garcias seemed to give her new life; and for a time she appeared to set at defiance the power of Don Manuel, whom she would scoff, and say such things to him that I wonder she did not provoke him to kill her: but, by some infatuation, the worse she treated him the more his love increased. And yet his love was a strange kind too, since it led him on to cruelties against the object of it; while to afflict you, whom he was not in love with, as I heard him tell Alonzo, gave him the most sensible pain: and he added, 'that he never conversed with you that he did not find an admiration for virtue arising in his breast; nor could the look on you without his heart's feeling humanised: and when, in compliance with his friend's request, he tortured you by his professions of love, he could have folded you in his arms with paternal affection, and shed tears for your persecutions—That had

he a child like you, he would give up his wicked courses, and in your sweet society learn to become a fit companion for such matchless purity.'

" I now soon found that Garcias had brought some intelligence with him that sadly afflicted my master; and I, alas! too soon found out what it was: for, one day, not minding I was in the room, Don Manuel said to Garcias, 'I would give half my possessions to be assured of that shattered vessel's having escaped the fury of the tempest, and that lady Victoria was in a place of safety.' Ah, how I grieved about you! But I did not mention it to Donna Matilda, because I thought she had sorrows enough without being led to fear for the safety of conte Urbino, whom she so fondly loved.

" Soon after Garcias returned, Don Manuel's conduct to the poor donna changed materially. He became stern and haughty, often threatening her with his vengeance, and saying cruel things to her which alarmed and afflicted her: so I ventured to recommend a change of manner to her, as being likely to effect one in my master;

giving you, dear donna, for an example of patient mildness that won his heart to pity. She would listen with apparent pleasure, for an hour together, to my histories about you; and make me show her where you used to sit, to walk, and sleep, and tell her how you employed yourself: and very anxious she was indeed to learn if I knew of your having any attachment of the tender kind; and was always asking if you ever held any conversations with Hippolyto, and if he seemed to be in your favour. And when I would tell her all the notice I had ever seen you bestow upon Hippolyto, and that I believed you were tenderly attached to some gentleman named Alphonso, she would colour up like vermilion, and, her eyes dancing with pleasure, she would seem all joy, and forget for the moment her own misfortunes. Then, again, I must describe your face and figure repeatedly, until she would grow quite sad; and say, 'how happy you were in being beloved by a man who merited your tenderest affections; whilst she, a poor deserted wretched being, was doomed to sigh her life away

in hopelessness, her affections fixed where now she must ever despair of meeting a return!' Then would she break from me, and shut herself up in her chamber to weep.

"At last, four days since, I was summoned to her by my master, who seemed in great alarm and agitation. She was in strong hysterics; and on her coming a little to herself, I learned from her that Don Manuel had just imparted some dreadful news to her; and had given her only twenty-four hours to determine upon becoming his wife, or to witness the execution of her dearest friends: and never shall I forget the agony of her mind during that day and night.

"At the appointed time next morning Don Manuel demanded her determination; when, from some unaccountable fit of caprice, she suddenly appeared to disbelieve the news he had told her, and peremptorily refused to be his wife: upon which Don Manuel, and that vile Garcias, in despite of her shrieks and her vehement resistance, bore her off, poor hapless crea-

ture! to that dreadful chamber where Theodore's mother was disposed of, and I saw the poor donna no more—but think they did not kill her; for on the next day I saw Juan put a flask of wine, a jar of water, a chicken, and some bread, into a basket, which he took into the parlour. My anxiety led me to watch; and in a very little time after I saw my master go up the grand staircase with that very basket and a lantern in his hand. I followed unobserved, and saw him enter that very chamber."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Victoria, starting from her seat; for, on hearing of a lantern, the recollection of the ruffian she had seen enter that apartment the morning she went to summon aid for Hero suddenly recurred, with the circumstance of his mysterious vanishing in the embrace of a colossal figure; all of which incidents, improbable as it may seem, had lain dormant in her memory until that moment: for so many and extraordinary had been the events she had encountered since her exile from conte di Vicenza's château, that many not immediately appertaining to her own

fate she had forgotten; while many others she had looked upon as the visions of a disturbed mind, and had therefore strove to banish them from her memory. But now hope and conviction arose with remembrance in her mind; and eagerly desiring signora Octavia and Teresa to follow her, she ran, or rather flew, borne on the pinions of hope, to the mysterious apartment. Octavia closely pursued her; and Teresa, although dismayed, was led on by affection to follow our poor agitated heroine, who in a colossal statue of Proserpine recognised the figure she had long believed a phantom presented by terror to her appalled imagination.

Minutely now Victoria examined the statue; and, to the increased surprise of her wondering companions, pressed her hands against every spot of it within her reach, in hopes of finding the secret spring which actuated the movements of this automaton—but without effect. At length, exhausted by disappointment, that tortured every fibre of her bleeding heart, and irritated her shattered nerves almost to phrensy, she stamped her

foot against the ground in hopeless impatience; and the statue, immediately advancing, expanded its arms, and, receiving Victoria within its body, closed upon her, while in retrograde motion it regained its original station.

CHAP. VIII.

By a gleam of light from below, Victoria saw that underneath the base of the statue was a short flight of steps, which she hesitated not to descend, although for a moment dismayed by the piercing shrieks of Octavia and Teresa, which she distinctly heard. From the foot of the stairs she entered a path that wound up the outside of one of the castle towers, so ingeniously contrived as to preclude all possibility of persons passing along it being seen by any one in or about the castle. Up this pass Victoria now swiftly trod, her heart beating high with hope, and praying fervently to Heaven for success. At length she reached a platform of about thirty feet diameter, which terminated the tower, and upon which a Gothic spire arose. Here, upon examination, she discovered a low iron door most curiously contrived within a niche in the spire. With much difficulty, from trepidation and want of sufficient

strength, she removed some iron bars which fastened it; and on opening the door she saw a flight of steps, up which she hastened, although with no other light to guide her than the feeble rays which some cracks in the building admitted. Soon she reached the termination of the stairs, and saw before her a large dark bulk, but of what nature the want of light would not permit her to distinguish; and much she had now to deplore her own precipitance, that sent her on this enterprise without a light, although aware, by example, of its necessity.

A chink in the wall, however, soon discovered to her a passage to the left; and while she hesitated whether to proceed, or return for a light, she distinctly heard a deep groan of anguish. Hesitation was now no more; rapidly she advanced along the passage, following the sound of sighs and groans, which at short intervals were repeated. After proceeding some paces, she found the stone work of the bulk over which her right hand passed, as a guide to her steps, give place to an iron grating, through which the piteous sounds of distress issued.

"Speak!" cried Victoria impetuously, no longer able to restrain her feeling, "speak, and tell me is Urbino here?"

"Who calls?" replied a female voice, in tones so feeble, that scarcely could they be distinguished.

"Ah, merciful God! this must be Matilda."

"Who comes at last to close Matilda's eyes?" said the miserable captive.

"A friend, come to release you from prison, to restore you to liberty and to happiness," exclaimed our now imprudent heroine.

Matilda answered not, although repeatedly called to in the sweetest tones of kindness and consolation by Victoria, who began to deplore her own precipitance more than ever, being now convinced that joy and surprise had proved too powerful for the exhausted spirits of the lovely victim of unmerited cruelty.

Accustomed in some degree to the change of light, Victoria at length, aided by a small chink in the spire, could distinguish the place she stood before was a grated door, that formed almost one side of

a small prison, in one corner of which she could plainly discern a female lying extended, without motion, upon a truss of straw. She no longer doubted Matilda's having fainted, and she felt the most painful impatience to get to her assistance; but, upon examination of the grate, she found it fastened by an immense padlock, that derided all her efforts to gain an entrance; and therefore, swift of foot as humanity and enthusiasm could waft her, she hastened away to procure every requisite aid; and, by the time she reached the base of the spire, a painful thought occurred, which, until the safety of another was involved, had never once obtruded itself—but it now struck her with dismay; for, should she not be able to develop the secret of effecting her return through the automaton, what would become of Matilda, who required immediate assistance? and what of herself, should the removal of the statue be found impossible, or at least a tedious process? But soon recovering her reliance upon Heaven, she proceeded, assured the Power who led her there would guide her back; and

ere she had got half way down the tower, a tumult of voices, accompanied by loud hammering, assailed her ears; and in a moment more she was met in her path by some of the brotherhood left to guard the castle, attended by Octavia Bernini; who, direfully alarmed for Victoria's safety, had flown to the officials, and informed them where the temerity of lady Victoria had precipitated her; and, directed by Octavia, the pioneers of the inquisitorial corps soon broke down the automaton, and cleared the way to an unimpeded passage.

Octavia was almost as much overjoyed to see our heroine as Victoria felt at beholding the assistance she wanted for Matilda so near. Briefly she now related to the officials the discovery she had made; and they having lights and forcing implements with them, instantly pressed forward; but, not being agitated like Victoria, soon distanced her, and had wrenched open a grated door before she and Bernini reached them; which they did just time enough to hear the captive found was an old man, and not a female as lady Victoria had imagined. Our

heroine, in breathless agitation, rushed forward, and beheld her venerable friend Sebastian.

Almost frantic with the joy of finding, and the fear of again being deprived of him by death, Victoria earnestly implored the officials to bear him to some adjoining chamber, where immediate assistance might effect his recovery; and with great humanity he was conveyed, attended by our anxious heroine, to that very room from whence Urbino had released her from the power of Vicenza, where Sebastian was now laid upon a bed, and the overjoyed Teresa dispatched for wine and other restoratives, which one of the Dominicans recommended as likely to be of service in recovering him from that horrid stupor into which want of nourishment and a free circulation of air had evidently thrown him.

Victoria now entreated the officials to delay no longer in seeking for the female who was confined in the same spire from whence they had liberated Sebastian. Willingly they hastened to comply with her request; but ere they had mounted half way up the

tower, they met some of their associates bearing the beautiful Matilda, who was still in a swoon, and whom they conveyed to a chamber approximate to that now occupied by Sebastian.

The men, when hastening to liberate the captive discovered by Victoria, had providentially turned to the right instead of the left, by which means Sebastian was so soon found; and those who remained behind to seek the female whom Victoria assured them was positively there, soon found that a lobby encircled the two prisons in which Sebastian and Matilda had been confined.

Matilda, by the application of proper specifics, soon recovered from her swoon; but apprised too hastily of her effectual release from the power of Don Manuel by poor Teresa, to whom the care of Matilda had been deputed, joy had the most alarming effect upon her long-tortured mind and enfeebled frame; and the return of father Pierre was impatiently longed for, both upon her account and Sebastian's, by Victoria, who looked upon the latter to be in imminent danger.

With extreme difficulty Victoria poured a tea-spoonful of cordial wine down Sebastian's throat; and in a few moments after she, with infinite trouble, effected his swallowing another. As much air as possible she had admitted into the room; while, to restore vital warmth to his extremities, the already-mentioned Dominican ordered friction with brandy to be applied; and every method which his judgment or Victoria's anxiety could suggest, as likely to promote Sebastian's recovery, the men cheerfully performed; while Octavia, at our heroine's request, attended while some more of the inquisitorial legions minutely inspected the spire, and the avenues leading to it, with the anxious hope of discovering the prison of Urbino, who they now little doubted was, as Victoria had positively affirmed, confined in the castle, and for whose fate the situation Sebastian was just found in created the utmost pity and solicitude.

Not until Victoria had caused her patient to swallow several spoonfuls of wine did he betray any symptom congenial to her anxious wishes; when opening his eyes

they wandered vacantly, totally unconscious of every surrounding object. But even from this effort of nature our ardent heroine's fond hopes found something to rest upon; and just at this moment signora Bernini, with one of the officials, returned in dejection to assure her, that, after the most minute scrutiny, they were all painfully convinced, from the formation of the spire, no other prison could possibly communicate with it, or any of the places round.

CHAP. IX.

VICTORIA was dreadfully disappointed; and after a pause of mournful agonising thought she addressed the official, who was in fact the very man of all the troop the easiest to be worked upon. He was a young Dominican priest of very moderate talents, pitiably ignorant, ever under the dominion of superstitious influence, and perpetually fancying that he felt divine inspiration. He possessed a feeling heart, and, notwithstanding his sacerdotal vow, still found a beautiful woman an object of interest.

"There are four towers to this castle," said Victoria with tremulous anxiety, "and think you, holy father, it is improbable that, upon inspection, we might find in the other three, prisons similar to those from which Providence has allowed us to emancipate these helpless captives?"

The official started. "Providence, I am

persuaded leads you on," he replied; "for well I remember, in our researches here, to have observed in the south wing a chamber exactly corresponding with that you have just made this fortunate discovery in, where on the floor we found a poniard, and saw sprinkled about the trace of newly-shed blood; from which circumstances we naturally concluded some diabolical transaction had recently been committed there."

A thrill of direful horror shot through Victoria's agonised heart. "Was it, could it be, the blood of Urbino?" He would not without resistance (if resistance was in his power), she well knew, suffer himself to be dragged to prison; and the blood might therefore as possibly be that of his opponents as his own. Then, with a heart throbbing with the painful extremes of anxious hope and fear, she resigned the care of Sebastian to Octavia; and, fervently invoking the auspices of Heaven, hastened with the official and several of his associates and attendants to the chamber in the south wing, before the door of which was placed a beautiful statue of Amphitrite; and upon en-

tering the room Victoria found it quite out of repair, and much more desolate than that in the opposite point. At the upper end of this apartment stood a colossal figure of Pluto, corresponding exactly with that of Proserpine in the other chamber.

In a few moments the statue of Pluto was broken down, and beneath where it stood was discovered a flight of steps which led to a passage round the outside of the tower, similar to that so recently found out. Hastily now our heroine and her companions made their way to the platform, where, finding an open entrance into the spire, Victoria's sanguine hopes sustained a painful blow; since, were there any one above in confinement, she naturally concluded the way up would not have been left so totally unguarded. However, she proceeded with her attendants up a staircase containing more steps than the one in the north spire, and which at length terminated, leading them into a kind of gallery, in the centre of which stood a pillar about four feet in height, and six in diameter.

Within the spire they plainly saw no pri-

son could possibly be; but the secret way leading to it, and this gallery surrounding, could not certainly have been formed without some designation: and after the most earnest investigation, and a diversity of opinions, it was believed by all, that the pillar contained a staircase leading to the tower beneath, where probably a prison was; but how to develop the means of removing the pillar was a matter of more perplexity. In vain they strove to break it down; it derided all their strength, and the ingenuity of their implements.

At length, when they were unwillingly about to relinquish the attempt, a small brass ring was discovered by Victoria concealed amid the deep carvings of the pillar; when upon raising it, to learn if possible what it could lead to, the sound of an iron chain falling gradually was distinguished; and they conjecturing the cause and effect, tried again, and with ease now removed the cornice of the column; when to their utter dismay and amazement they beheld not a staircase as they expected, but the mouth, as it seemed, of a draw-well. Suspended

to a chain of apparently a prodigious length was a piece of machinery, containing an iron arm-chair, with a body chain and hand-cuffs fastened to it; and on each side of this chair was fixed a kind of bucket, evidently meant to carry the barbarous ruffians employed to precipitate the hapless victim of cruelty into some dreadful fate below.

All shuddered, but all were silent; since the conjectures of what this shocking preparation led to were almost too horrible to reveal.

Victoria, tortured by the most soul-harrowing apprehensions, at length mournfully and tremulously demanded if the official would not proceed.

"Proceed!" exclaimed he, recoiling. "Most assuredly not. None but a company of maniacs, ignorant as we are of what this terrible machinery may lead to, would venture into it."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Victoria in an agony of grief and disappointment; "and will no one proceed in the path of humanity because its termination is uncertain?"

"No: we will not venture," was firmly re-iterated by all. Victoria burst into a con-

vulsive passion of tears; and as she despairingly hung over this terrific cylinder she espied a piece of white rag, hitched in among the machinery of the chair; and as every thing about this place was now of consequence to her, she eagerly caught up the rag; when, oh! reader, conceive, for we cannot pourtray, the tumult it awakened in her agitated mind! for, on beholding the initials of her own name, she recognised it to be a fragment of the identical handkerchief she had bound round Thomas's wound, and which Urbino had afterwards taken into his own possession.

Proof strong as holy writ was this that Urbino had been precipitated down this tube of destruction; and now almost frantically she implored some of the brotherhood to descend in search of him; but to no purpose. All remained inflexible to her eloquent entreaties, her heart-rending grief, the claims of humanity, or the immense rewards she offered.

"Alas! my daughter," said the official, almost affected to tears, "your entreaties are, must be vain; since no being upon earth, I

am persuaded, can be found possessed of sufficient temerity to venture down."

"Yes, one!" she cried with firmness: "yes, one; and that being am I!"

"You!" exclaimed the official: "you! Insanity! No never, never shall you be permitted so rashly to precipitate yourself into destruction, into the den of devouring beasts of prey, into the mouth of some horrid monster of the deep, into some dreadful gulf or whirlpool! I shudder, I tremble, I cannot longer think upon the horrors you have inspired, or allow you, my daughter, to contemplate further this dreadful vortex of perdition!"

"What are these buckets meant for?" replied Victoria calmly. "Think you, holy father, the ruffians, whom they evidently were formed to convey down, would go where inevitable destruction awaited them?"

"Certainly not," the priest replied: "but they knew whither they were going, and went no further than safety would permit; and, aware of the dangers that lay before them, they were prepared to shun them: while you, my daughter, ignorant as you are

of all below, might rush at once into destruction! No, you shall not go: the castle will ere long be rased, and in time we shall, by that means, learn to what this leads."

"In time!" repeated Victoria: "yes, when too late to save Urbino! Remember the state we have found that venerable man reduced to. Delay is dangerous, is criminal; and if you oppose my descent, my immediate descent, the blood of Urbino be on your head!" She raised her hands and eyes to heaven, and sinking upon her knees emphatically said: "Oh! just and mighty Creator of the Universe! if by this man I am prevented from seeking my husband to give him instant assistance, forgive his enemies, and to this man's obduracy place his murder!"

The official shuddered. "I will not prevent your going, my daughter; I will only strongly advise you against such rashness."

"Advise me," she replied, "to stay and expire by tortures more excruciating than any I can meet with in the performance of my duty!"

The official gazed upon her, until the augmenting resolution that marked her

manner, the fire of enthusiasm which illumed her eyes, he felt persuaded were inspired by some supernatural influence, and that it would be criminal in him longer to oppose what seemed almost the will of Heaven. "Well, go, my daughter," he at length said: "but your rashness and obstinacy be upon your own head."

"Heaven's care will be with me, and with you too, holy father, if you assist me in saving the life of Urbino."

The official turned pale as death. "What do you expect of me?" said he in alarm.

"Give me your solemn promise to remain here, carefully to watch the agitation of the chain, to learn from that, if I am permitted to return, when it is my wish to be elevated. Only until the return of my friends from Cadaques do I mean your promise to extend; for, when they are informed of where I am, I doubt not of their proving attentive sentinels."

"Solemnly I promise, as I hope to find favour in the sight of my Redeemer, never to quit my attentive guard here while a hope exists of your return. Yet let me en-

treat, implore you to delay this terrible enterprise until your friends return from Cadaques;" and the tears now rolled down the official's cheeks.

Victoria, apprehensive of being prevented, and painfully aware of the fatal consequences of delay, would not attend to this man's advice or wishes, but requested the soldiers to supply her immediately with a torch, a lantern, and some kind of cordial likely to be serviceable to Urbino should she find him still living. Instantly her request was complied with; and making a convenient disposition of those things, she, after devoutly on her knees imploring the protection of Heaven, placed herself in the iron chair, and with a firm voice gave orders for lowering it.

The official and three other priests present now sunk upon their knees and prayed fervently aloud for her success and preservation, while the laymen slowly and sorrowfully unrolled the chain that was, as they feared, to precipitate this young and beautiful creature into inevitable destruction. The moment was awful: pity, dismay, and

anxiety, were strongly pourtrayed on every countenance except Victoria's, where faith, hope, and charity beamed celestially, as she raised her beautiful hands and eyes in pious supplications to Mercy's throne. At length she was lost to view: the priests chanted in solemn sadness a farewell benediction. The chain creaked direfully its harsh responses. The lessening voice of Victoria was heard giving melody to the choir. The soldiers, subdued, would have precipitately drawn her up again, had not the official, still believing in the supernatural influence, and bound by his solemn promise to her wishes, exerted his authority, which now only could enforce from the men obedience.

Slowly Victoria descended upwards of fifty fathoms, her mind in a state of hope and fear, of courage and apprehension blended, that may possibly be imagined, yet cannot be described; but enveloped in the shield of true piety she was enabled to sustain the conflict.

The chain at length was all unrolled, and Victoria found herself about six feet below the tube, in a long and narrow cavern,

through which an inlet of the sea murmured mournfully, dashing in awful solemnity its waves against the projection of the rocks on each side in its slow undulation. The machinery in which she sat hung over a flat piece of rock, raised scarcely two inches above the surface of the water, which seemed unfathomable, from the black mass of shadow that fell upon it. To her right she beheld a path: she hesitated not to quit her seat; and taking her torch in her left hand, to leave her right at liberty to assist her on her way, she proceeded along the path, rugged and dangerous from the bed of rock over which it wound, and its being wet and slippery from the spray and the returning waves, that after every retreat seemed to rise with an intention of overwhelming the path, which it sometimes washed over. Our heroine stopped for a moment to observe the movement of the water, and, perceiving it to be a retiring tide, went on without apprehension; and, as she proceeded, rose with the path sufficiently above the stream to escape all annoyance from it.

At length, with a palpitating heart, she

reached the termination of this rugged and fatiguing defile, where she discovered a low iron-door, secured on the side next to her with several massy bars and chains. Rapidly Victoria advanced to the door: trembling expectation, with agonising fears and hopes, that almost by their tumult rent her throbbing heart, now led her on to phrensied agitation. The energies of her mind lent her strength, and by the vehemence of her ardent exertions she was enabled to remove the ponderous barriers. Almost frantically she pushed in the door, her mind in that state of commotion which precluded all possibility of forming expectations. Intuitively she rushed through the door, when horror first seemed to animate perception: suddenly she shrunk back, she paused, she trembled, she rested against the door-case, and her eyes rolled wildly and wistfully around as if in search of some expected horror. In a moment more reason re-assumed her influence, and Victoria saw that she was at the entrance of a miserable dungeon, the noxious damp of which had considerably diminished the brightness of her torch.

Eagerly she now gazed around, and could

just distinguish in one corner of this direful place a human figure extended upon a truss of straw. Victoria's senses sickened, but she rushed forward to the wretched bed. The person was clad in the habit of a monk; he lay motionless as death, and one arm was thrown across his face, totally concealing it. Wildly she grasped the hand that lay extended by his side, to feel if a corse deluded her tortured hope, when the scorching heat of malignant fever met her touch: almost shrieking with apprehension she pushed the arm away that obscured the face, and emphatically exclaiming "My Urbino! my life! my husband!" fell senseless by his side.

CHAP. X.

For about twenty minutes Victoria continued in a state of total insensibility; and many more elapsed before she was sufficiently recovered to perceive that in her fall she had extinguished the torch; and the horrid ideas this darkness inspired roused at once her senses to their fullest vigor. Hastily she searched out the torch, and opened her lantern to re-light it; when, between her own agitated haste, and the damp air admitted now more forcibly in, the candle also was extinguished, and she left in complete darkness, cut off from every succour, from every hope, but that of expiring by Urbino's side.

Dreadful, most dreadful, were now the sensations that agonised Victoria's mind for the fate of Urbino, who was evidently at the last extremity, and by immediate assistance only could a hope be cherished of saving him from speedy death; and that

assistance she had, by her own precipitance, fatally cut off. Her not returning would, of course, realise all the horrid ideas conceived of that terrible place, and effectually prevent the humanity of others from leading them after her; and without a light to guide her she could possibly have no hope of gaining the tube. But after a dreadful pause of deliberation she resolved to attempt it; and should she in her wanderings meet a watery grave, it would be in pursuit of succour for Urbino, who had braved all the horrors of a similar fate for her.

With some difficulty, from the excessive trepidation her dreadful situation inspired, she found out the door; and as she was about to pass through it, the sad idea that she was in all probability going from Urbino for ever arrested her steps. She returned; she searched out his wretched pallet—she sunk on her knees beside it—she grasped his parched hand, which gently returned her pressure.

"My God! he still retains his senses! He knows me!" she exclaimed; and bursting into tears, and imprinting a farewell kiss

upon his burning hand, she precipitately arose—"Adieu, my Urbino!" she continued, "I go in pursuit of succour for you. But, if I fail, we soon shall meet in a better world." Then again finding the door, she passed through it in a state of agonising solicitude scarcely to be conceived; and as she breathed a fervent supplication to Heaven for aid, a faint gleam of light shot across the water.

The transition from despair to that cheering hope this ray of light beamed with proved almost too much for her agitated mind to bear. Again the light gleamed; again it vanished; and Victoria saw that it had proceeded from beyond the dungeon, and not in the direction which those would come whose humanity might lead in pursuit of her. Again the light appeared much brighter and nearer than before, and, continuing in view, seemed advancing. Dreadfully agitated now by a thousand vague conjectures of alarm, Victoria hastened round a projection of rock where the dungeon door was situated, to learn if possible what this light could portend; when, to her utter dismay, she beheld slowly and cautiously ad-

vancing, along a path among the rocks, a man of dark and diabolical appearance: his form resembled Garcias, and Victoria shook with terror.

Fear and uncertainty fixed Victoria to the spot; and in a moment more she saw another ruffian slowly pursuing the steps of the first. Direful were now her apprehensions. Suddenly the men stopped, and entered into earnest conference. The man whose figure most alarmed our heroine drew a poniard from his bosom; and by the gesticulations of both, while they spoke in cautious whispers, she doubted not the theme of their discourse was most horrible, and her anticipating heart told her it was no less than the murder of Urbino. The men again began to move; the torch he bore gleamed full upon the face of the foremost; she saw that it was indeed Garcias, and her dismayed senses sickened with hopeless horror. More quickly they now advanced, and were only within a few paces of her, when, in wildest consternation, she retreated to the dungeon, resolving, since she too was clad in the habit of a monk, to throw her-

self over Urbino, to pass for him, and so to receive the death-blow, from Garcias, in his stead. Before her trepidation could allow her to put this design in execution, Garcias and his companion reached the door; but, upon seeing it open, they started, stopped, and pondered for a moment: then, with a tremendous oath, Garcias broke the dreadful silence, declaring "the Inquisition had discovered that prison, and cheated them of their victim."

"No," said his associate, in the voice of the vile Polydore, for it was indeed Vicenza —"no; yonder he lies, motionless. I fancy death has anticipated us here, and spoiled our sport."

"That we shall soon see," returned Garcias, entering; "but be it as it may, he shall have this poniard in his d—d heart, for fear of accidents."

A deep groan from Urbino announced his existence; and a diabolical grin of sanguinary joy gleamed on the ruthless countenance of Garcias, as he rapidly advanced towards the pallet; when, just as he reached it, Victoria glided in between him and his

devoted victim. Her cowl had fallen back in her distraction; the torch beamed full upon her face, which was pale and ghastly as the horrors of her mind could make it: and the moment Garcias beheld her, the poniard fell from his uplifted hand, and uttering a loud cry of dismay he precipitately retreated in visible horror and consternation, while his amazed companion closely pursued his faltering steps.

Wondering what all this could mean, and almost doubting the evidence of her senses, Victoria gained the door, and there she waited in direful expectation of a dreadful solution. At length the reflexion of the retreating torch was lost to her view, and total darkness again reigned. She shuddered, she trembled, she feared now to leave Urbino: all, all, was cheerless despair. Insensibly she sunk upon her knees to pray for succour; when she suddenly beheld another gleam of light emanating along the path she had trod from the tube. A moment scarcely elapsed when she heard her own name repeated in a tone of agonised solicitude. The voice awakened a tumult

In her mind of joyful sensations mingled with doubt and amazement. The light rapidly advanced; again she heard the voice. Its second sound was conviction. Victoria started from her knees: she attempted to move forward, but her excessive agitation impeded her intention; she sunk against the rocks. In an instant more the arms of her brother encircled her, and the violence of her emotions threw over her faculties a momentary suspension.

The soothing voice, the fond endearments of Alphonso, in the moment of her recovery, softened the conflict into tenderness. Tears relieved her throbbing heart, and every wandering thought returned to Urbino. She saw conte Ariosto had not come alone to her, and in his companions she beheld the venerable Alberti and the faithful Diego. She reached out her hands in gratitude and kindness to them. She had not power to speak, but, looking expressively at Diego, pointed to the dungeon.

Understanding her wish, Diego hurried into the prison of Urbino; and, on approaching the miserable bed, he started in

amazement, and uttering an exclamation of joy and astonishment, sunk upon his knees, and, throwing down his torch, clasped Urbino in his arms in all the phrensied energy the sensations of his feeling heart inspired, on recognising in the wretched prisoner the youth he had been so firmly attached to—Theodore, the interesting child of old Teresa's affection, whom he had so long believed numbered with the dead, and whom in the disguise of Hippolyto, though so much with him, he never once suspected was him whom he ceased not to lament. Victoria instantly comprehending all that the emotions and exclamations of Diego proclaimed, broke from the supporting arms of her brother, and was in an instant by Diego's side.

"This then is Theodore, whom you so firmly loved!" said she: "and will you not then hasten, Diego, to snatch him from death?"

Diego started to his feet, and, looking mournfully upon our heroine as he spoke, said in an accent of deep despair, "Snatch him from death! Ah! lady Victoria, is

that in my power? The villains, the fiends, the monsters of iniquity, placed him here to perish; and we have, alas! only arrived to close his eyes!"

Victoria, in speechless agony, flung herself into the arms of her brother; who had, with Alberti, followed her into the dank cell.

"For the sake of Heaven, my beloved, my darling sister," said Alphonso tenderly, "moderate this excess of grief, and we will make every exertion that affection and humanity can inspire to save him."

The reverend Alberti now approached the bed, and, having taken the hand of Theodore, spoke comfort to the anguish of Victoria.

"This is not the pulse of death," he said, "although he certainly labours under the influence of a severe indisposition. But despair not, my child; since the assistance he has been by cruelty deprived of, may now, with the permission of Providence, restore him to health: and we ought to make no delay in conveying him to where he may instantly receive the necessary aid, since

every fleeting moment must, in his case, be of importance."

Immediately was the opinion of Alberti attended to. Gently was Urbino raised from the truss of straw, (which but for the heroism of Victoria, and the singular interposition of Providence, would have been his bed of death,) and tenderly conte Ariosto and Diego carried him to the tube, preceded by Alberti and Victoria bearing torches.

As the machinery could only contain three persons at a time, it was determined that our heroine and Alberti should give place to Alphonso and Diego, who could better support the helpless Urbino in his ascent. But while they were placing the poor invalid securely in the chair, he had clasped one of Victoria's hands fast within his; and when she found it necessary to disengage herself from his grasp, he appeared so unwilling to resign her hand, that, with a supplicating look to her attentive brother, she pleaded for not being separated from Urbino.

"Fear not, my Victoria," said the affec-

tionate Alphonso; "you shall not be divided. I will resign my place to you; although I fear you can give but little assistance to this humane stranger in supporting your feeble charge."

"The strength which nature has denied me affection will supply me with," replied Victoria, as she took her place in the machinery: "and my brother, who followed me to this place of supposed destruction, knows full well the mighty powers of affection."

The agitation of the suspended chain having announced to those above that they were wished to elevate the machinery, Victoria found herself returning safe and unhurt from a place where Providence alone could have inspired her with sufficient courage to go; her mind, however, not less agitated than it was in her descent, although very different were now the causes which actuated her emotions.

At length they safely reached the summit of the almost immeasurable tube; and the moment our heroine was beheld by the interested spectators, the most tumultuous

shouts of joy were reiterated by all, which at almost any other period would have sensibly affected the feeling heart of Victoria: but now her agitated mind was absorpt by one idea only; and looking eagerly around for father Pierre, who was watching there in painful solicitude, "O save Urbino, holy father!" she exclaimed, and instantly fell, in a state of total insensibility, into the arms of Octavia; who had been led, by fear and anxiety, from the bed-side of Sebastian to that spot of painful expectation.

CHAP. XI.

So severe had been the fatigues and so dreadful the conflicts Victoria's frame and mind had experienced, that, the moment the great work she had undertaken was accomplished, she sunk subdued into a bed of sickness, from whence she was unable to arise for many days—and not until the painful anxiety of her mind had been tranquillised by the solemn assurances of father Pierre, that he entertained not the smallest doubt of the perfect and rapid recovery of Urbino.

At the time Roselia's letter from the château of comte de Montfort to conte Ariosto reached Andalusia, Alphonso was gone, accompanied by the anxious Alberti, upon the before-mentioned expedition against Great Britain. The expedition failed in its success, and the Spanish troops returned to Cadiz, where Roselia's letter

awaited conte Ariosto; who, obtaining leave of absence, instantly set out for France, and arrived at St. Marguerite's in a few days after our heroine's departure upon her arduous enterprise.

From the afflicted abbess Alphonso learned all that had befallen his beloved sister during her residence in Provence, with every necessary information relative to her present expedition into Spain, whither he immediately followed her, with his constant attendant Alberti, carrying with him a letter of introduction from the prior of St. Lewis to the sub-vicar of the holy office at Cadaques. He arrived at the holy office just as the last-mentioned convention were assembled, where he learned from father Pierre particular intelligence of his sister; and accompanied the inquisitors on their return to the castle, which was much earlier than had been expected, and where they found every individual in the utmost consternation and dismay. The long absence of Victoria had converted every horrid apprehension into reality in the minds of all; and, on the ar-

rival of her anxious friends at the castle, both facts and fears were eagerly communicated.

In all the mental anguish his strong affection for his sister could inspire, Alphonso followed his guides to the south tower. The moment he beheld the dreadful tube, his senses sickened. He burst into tears; and, seizing a lighted torch, which the faithful official held over the cylinder, to watch in anxious hope for the agitation of the chain, vaulted instantly into the iron chair; and, without the power of speaking, motioned to the by-standers to unroll the chain.

"Oh, take me with you, my son!" exclaimed the venerable Alberti, snatching a pistol from one of the soldier's belts: "you are the prop of my life—with you will I perish; for without you I cannot exist!"

Alberti was now assisted into the horrid machinery; for vain were the entreaties of Alphonso to him not to accompany him. The old man was firm to his purpose; and Alphonso, although as valiant a warrior as ever earned a laurel, was so sensibly affect-

ed, that he sobbed aloud upon the neck of his venerable and beloved friend.

The chain was now slowly unrolling, when Diego (who had just entered the castle, and learned whither the temerity of Victoria had led her) suddenly arrested its progress.

" Conte Ariosto," he cried, " you are the last of an illustrious house; your life is of consequence, mine of none, but as it may prove useful to your family: give up then this dreadful enterprise, and let me only descend to seek my dear, my amiable young lady. Believe me, I have courage and attachment sufficient to undertake it; and if there is either fidelity or truth in man, I will restore lady Victoria to you, or perish in the attempt."

" You have my most lively gratitude, generous man," said Alphonso; " but it is my duty to seek my beloved sister; and no power on earth shall prevent my doing so, whilst life and liberty are spared to me."

" It is my duty then to attend you, and to spill my last blood in the service of your

family," returned Diego, as he leaped into the vacant bucket.

"As I know you not, nor the ties which bind you to my family, I cannot argue upon your duties," replied conte Aristo; "but I entreat you give up this generous intention. Two, with the aid of Heaven, will be sufficient to rescue my sister; or, if we are doomed to fail in the attempt, two will surely be sufficient to perish."

"I will not survive the house of Ariosto," said Diego in a tone of firmness that convinced Alphonso further parley would be vain: and now provided by the officials with another torch, and sufficient arms and ammunition, they descended, attended by the prayers and good wishes of all who witnessed their enterprise; which terminated as we have already informed our reader.

In about an hour after Victoria had been consigned by indisposition to her bed, signora Farinelli and Roselia were safely conducted by Thomas to the castle, where now were assembled so many individuals tenderly attached to our invalids, that our com-

passionate readers can little doubt that every possible care was taken of them which affection could inspire.

Sebastian was found to be in far the most critical situation of any of father Pierre's patients: for although his senses and powers of articulation were soon restored, he had been so dreadfully reduced by famine, sorrow, and solicitude, that exhausted nature could scarcely sustain the conflict; and it required all the aid which skill could derive from medicine, all the care that tenderness could give, to feed the feeble embers of receding life, and fan them gently to reanimation: but the attention and solicitude of his friends were rewarded by his recovery; which, although very slow in its advances, was at length perfect.

The fever which the anguish of his mind and want of proper nutriment had thrown Urbino into, had passed its direful crisis; its virulence was gently abating, and his perception gradually returning, when Providence (through the medium of affection) led Victoria into his dreadful prison; so that when he was removed into purer air, when

proper restoratives were administered, and every tender care bestowed upon him, aided by a certainty of being in the hands of his friends, with the still more salutary, though yet confused, perception of his adored Victoria having taken a tender and active part in his preservation, he was soon enabled to throw off every trace of the disease, except an extreme weakness and lassitude, which not even the efforts of a strong and unimpaired constitution could enable him to conquer sufficiently to admit of his leaving his bed for many days after his fever had totally subsided; and during this confinement, Diego, at his earnest entreaty, gave him, as regularly as his medicines every hour, a full and circumstantial detail of all Diego knew of Victoria's encountering for his preservation.

At first Diego was compelled to convey his intelligence with great caution, as he found his communications too sensibly affected his hearer: but by degrees Urbino could hear all; would dwell with the most enraptured delight upon every incident, on every word and action, which were faith-

fully recounted to him: but never could a sentence upon the subject be repeated to him without his evincing the most violent emotions of gratitude; and although Diego's information would for a time destroy that state of tranquillity which Pierre considered so essential to his recovery, it proved fortunately more efficacious than the good monk's medicines, by restoring to his long-tortured breast those hopes of happiness which the conduct of Victoria in their parting interview at St. Marguerite's had dissipated.

During Urbino's confinement conte Ariosto introduced himself to his acquaintance, and soon won his sincere regard. Of nearly the same age, with a marked similitude of manners and dispositions—equally versed in knowledge, and both indebted to nature for uncommon intellectual powers, and hearts that contained every virtue, they found a kind of congenial sympathy impel their affections to mingle quickly, and to cement into the strongest bonds of friendship; and perhaps the tender attachment each was known to feel for Victoria aided not a little in promoting their mutual re-

gard. Soon their fast-growing friendship banished all reserve from their conversation. Theodore talked of Victoria, his hopes and wishes; Alphonso spoke of his sister, as the affianced wife of his friend; and often mentioned the plans he proposed for having their nuptials solemnised at the castle of Palino, with all the proper forms and splendor their rank in life demanded, as soon as they were all able to reach Tuscany. It was during one of these interesting conversations upon arranging the plan of this intended union that Diego one day entered, and, as he delivered a billet to Urbino, said—

"From Donna Matilda, my lord, who wishes to know when you can allow her the happiness of seeing you?"

"Tell her," Urbino replied, "the very moment I am able to leave my chamber; for so great is my anxiety to see her, that my first visit shall be to her."

As Theodore finished this message, which he gave with marked emotion, he caught the wondering glances of Alphonso and Diego, and a deep blush instantly overspread his before pallid countenance.

Conte Ariosto was startled, felt uneasy at he scarcely knew what, and retired to a window to conceal his almost undefinable sensations: but soon recovering his composure, he turned suddenly round; he beheld Urbino, visibly affected, perusing the billet; he heard him heave deep sighs; he saw him brush away a trickling tear; and when he ceased reading, he seemed so melancholy, so thoughtful, so abstracted, that Alphonso could no longer restrain his painful curiosity, but, availing himself of the privileges of friendship, asked Urbino, if Donna Matilda was nearly related to him? "Related! Oh, God!" exclaimed Urbino, while his colour changed from crimson to the pale hue of death, and an expression partaking of horror and anguish became visible upon his intelligent countenance; but after a few moments of painful struggling to suppress his feelings, he proceeded in a faltering and grief-directed voice—

"Forgive, conte Ariosto, I entreat you, my not being now as explicit as friendship and my situation with your family so forcibly demand. From my earliest days I haae

seemed the child of mystery; and now when circumstances should call forth all the candor, all the ingenuousness of confidence and honour, cruel, cruel Mystery claims me more immediately for her own. Bound by the guardian of my youth, the preserver of my life, to secresy and silence upon many essential subjects relative to myself, until he should judge proper to withdraw his ambiguous interdict, I have never yet appeared to lady Victoria as that ingenuous character which I may say nature made me. I fondly thought, for I had been led to believe it, when last I saw my Victo—— your sister, that the moment was at hand when I might emerge from my mysterious character, and present myself before her as a being not unworthy of her esteem. But, alas! alas! my schemes of happiness are blighted. No more must I presume to look where my only hope of earthly happiness is centred; for that mysterious man, of whom I spoke, alas! is gone I know not whither — fled, I fear, with the wretches who inhabited this castle. With him I have lost every clue to myself; still am I bound

in the dreadful chains of his mystery, and torn from every hope of bliss that life ever promised me."

Fathers Pierre and Anselmo now entered the chamber, and Alphonso availed himself of this opportunity of retiring to meditate upon all he had just remarked and heard. With every disposition to be pleased with Urbino, with the most exalted opinion of his probity and honour, conte Ariosto was sensibly hurt at finding any thing in him that could awaken the shadow even of a suspicion to his disadvantage; but tremblingly alive to the honour, the delicacy of his sister, he felt uneasy, offended, mortified, nay almost jealous for her.

That Matilda's billet had worked a total revolution in Urbino's mind relative to his union with Victoria was too evident to be doubted; and how to account for her possessing such influence over his apparently amiable friend was a matter of much distress and perplexity to Alphonso, who wandered about the grounds, reflecting, reasoning, and reconsidering every circumstance, until in each point of view in which he could

place Urbino's past conduct to Victoria he saw him so every way honourable, that he became convinced suspicion of his integrity was injustice, and he at length determined upon taking the earliest opportunity of speaking candidly to him upon the subject; and having thus resolved, he turned his steps to the chamber of his sister, where Matilda, the object who had so much chagrined him, was paying her first visit to our heroine.

Matilda no sooner found herself rescued from the power and persecutions of Don Manuel, and assured of the perfect safety of Theodore and Sebastian, than her recovery from indisposition became rapid; and the moment she was able to undertake it, her gratitude led her to request permission to wait upon Victoria, who was still confined to her chamber, slow in her recovery; for her disease was mental, and nothing had been done to remove the barbed arrow which had destroyed her peace. From the moment the preservation of Urbino was effected, her mind, having no longer action to engage it and stimulate its energies, set-

tled upon one hopeless subject. The fatigue and indisposition which had at first confined her to her bed was quite subsided; but still low and languid, she was unable to leave her chamber, and only obtained rest by powerful opiates which father Pierre found necessary to administer. The visit of Matilda was dreaded by her, but urbanity forbad her declining to receive it.

To our heroine's chamber, then, was Matilda conducted by Octavia; and in her Victoria beheld, as she expected, the female who had been dragged by ruffians into her chamber — but now appearing infinitely more beautiful than she had seemed upon that memorable night, for now the sweetest expression of sensibility had taken place of those which terror and despair had strongly delineated. Victoria, supported by the sympathising Ursuline, received Matilda; who, the moment she saw our heroine, rushed forward, and, catching her in her arms, burst into a violent passion of tears, sobbed convulsively upon her bosom, pressed her hands to her lips, her heart, and acted a thousand extravagances of enthusiasm

before she could articulate a broken and almost unintelligible acknowledgment of her obligations to her.

Signora Farinelli, fearing the effect such an excess of unrestrained sensibility might have upon both Matilda and Victoria, called the former to order, with a degree of mild dignity that at once insured obedience. Matilda took a seat: but, upon observing the wan and languid countenance of Victoria, she dissolved into a new flood of tears, and, looking with the most tender expression upon her, sobbed out lamentations for the sad state humanity had reduced her to.

"I see, I see," she said, "you were infinitely too delicate to undergo all your compassionate heart led you through to save us from destruction. For the good Sebastian's preservation and my own I think I shall be able presently to thank you as I ought; but for Theodore's—oh! I can never, no, never, speak rationally, since for his welfare I would freely yield my life; since his safety and happiness are dearer, infinitely dearer to me than my own existence."

The attentive Ursuline saw Victoria's lip

quiver; paler she could not become; but her bosom heaved convulsively; and Farinelli determined to check a warmth and impetuosity likely to inflict tortures upon the wounded heart of her beloved pupil.

"Donna Matilda," she said, "our amiable heroine is, as you know, but just recovering from a severe indisposition; and the scenes she has lately been engaged in have shattered her nerves most dreadfully. You cannot doubt her sensibility, and will not wonder that I should fear your excess of feeling may too much affect her in this her delicate state, or that I should earnestly intreat a total silence at present upon subjects too oppressive to you both."

Matilda bowed acquiescence, while her eloquent eyes most plainly told she knew not that self-command which could enable her to talk upon one subject while her heart was filled with another. A painful pause for a moment ensued; but signora Bernini promptly relieved the embarrassment of all by breaking the awkward silence, and eloquently descanted upon nothings, until Victoria and Matilda regained their composure

sufficiently to bear a part in conversation; when, in despite of the agonising reflexions the presence of Matilda awakened in the heart of our heroine, she found something like fascination leading her insensibly to be pleased with her—although she saw, or fancied she saw, a fire and impetuosity in Matilda's language and manner not perfectly congenial to a mind so truly feminine as her own.

Conte Ariosto, fearing to agitate the now susceptible nerves of his sister, ever entered her chamber with much caution and gentleness: and now the little party assembled were so engaged by conversation and painful reflexion, that his entrance was unperceived until he stood before them; when Victoria hastened to announce him to Donna Matilda, on whom he looked with marked coldness and aversion—her unexpected appearance restoring to his mind every unpleasant reflexion he had been anxious to dismiss. Our heroine saw in Alphonso's manner something so unusual, that she felt alarm, and hastily demanded if conte Urbino was worse.

"Oh, no," Alphonso replied; "I left him wonderfully well, and in high spirits too, for we have been arranging every thing for the speedy ratification of your union."—The last sentence he pronounced with striking emphasis, and with his fine and penetrating eyes keenly fixed upon Matilda, whose countenance he instantly saw rapidly undergo a variety of changes: he beheld in her trembling frame the most painful agitation, and in a moment more her senses fled, and her respiration quite was gone.

Victoria threw herself upon the bosom of her beloved Farinelli and wept, since the cause of Matilda's fainting was too apparent to be doubted; and every former sad conviction was now more painfully impressed upon her bursting heart.

Every thing was done for the recovery of Matilda, who, the moment she could articulate, expressed an eager wish to return to her own chamber. In visible confusion she bade Victoria adieu, and was supported by Octavia and Roselia to her own apartment.

CHAP. XII.

The distraction of mind Matilda's swooning had thrown Alphonso into, and the confusion which succeeded, prevented his observation of its effect upon Victoria; but now more than ever convinced that something existed which threatened destruction to his beloved sister's peace, since her late proceedings had but too strongly evinced her tenderest affections being irrevocably placed upon conte Urbino, and trembling for the happiness of a being inexpressibly dear to him, he resolved instantly to demand an explanation from Urbino: he therefore hastily bent his impatient steps to the chamber of Theodore, whom he found so sad, so apparently wretched, that his compassionate heart knew not how, in such a moment, to introduce a subject which he doubted not would augment his distress. They both sat silent

for a considerable time, buried in painful musing: at length the fraternal feelings of conte Ariosto conquering every other, he hastily arose from his seat and took the hand of Urbino.

"I know not," he said, "if this is the hand of a friend; but as I believe it, and fervently hope to find it such, I take it in amity, and trust you will excuse me if I give you one moment of mental pain. With a mind open and candid, a disposition governed by impetuosity, and a heart glowing with ardent wishes to find its favourable opinion deserved by you, I cannot longer bear to shelter these painful suspicions which circumstances have awakened. Conte Urbino, believe me, I would not for worlds attempt to penetrate these secrets you wish to withhold from me, did not the menaced happiness of a sister command me to it. I must, conte Urbino, exert every faculty of my mind, strain every fibre of my heart and frame, to preserve the peace, the fame, the delicacy of my sister unwounded; for Victoria di Modena has now no guardian, no protector in life but me:—

she claims all my tenderness, my anxious care; for she is my sister, my friend, the idol of my affections, the pride of my heart, the boast of our house, the most amiable among women."

"Oh! conte Ariosto, need I be told what lady Victoria di Modena is? On earth is there a being who has such cause as I to know the perfections of her matchless mind?" Urbino replied with a look and in a tone of enthusiastic admiration and deep despondence touchingly blended: "Victoria is the idol of my affections, conte; nor can the heart of her anxious brother beat with more fervent wishes for her happiness, or pant more ardently to secure her peace, her fame, her delicacy, than the suspected man before you."

"Then why," said Alphonso with quickness, "why do you awaken such injustice by your evident attachment to another? Why does Matilda possess sufficient influence to break off your alliance with our house? and why should she be agitated, even to swooning, upon hearing of your nuptials with my sister mentioned?"

Urbino shuddered.—" Matilda swoon upon hearing of my promised happiness!—Can it be possible?"

" By Heaven 'tis fact!" replied Alphonso: " even but now has she recovered, and been conveyed from my sister's chamber to her own."

Urbino fell back in his chair, and for a moment his faculties seemed suspended: at length he recovered, and faintly said—

" If you have not been deceived, conte Ariosto, in the cause of Matilda's fainting, it has indeed given a fell blow to my happiness. Oh! dear, amiable, ill-fated Matilda! would to Heaven we had never, never met!"

A strong expression of horror overspread his countenance as he uttered this apostrophe. Alphonso earnestly observing him for a moment, while concern and indignation agitated his own breast, at length spoke with calm impressive dignity—

" Conte Urbino, farewell," said he. " I would not have troubled you with this interview, but that I had taken you to my heart, because I thought you well deserving

a distinguished place there. I called you friend—I wished to call you brother—and would, with joy, have given you what I consider the highest prize that ever fell to the lot of man. Judge then how I thought of you. But I am deceived. I have offended the dignity of my sister, by deigning to solicit any explanation of a conduct that so unequivocally unfolds itself: but the obligations the house of Ariosto is under to you for the preservation of its greatest treasure, the vows my sister was compelled by villany to give you, can only plead my excuse. May you be happy, conte Urbino, with her who claims you! Victoria di Modena claims a man of honour, and an undivided heart."

"Stay, I conjure you stay, conte Ariosto," exclaimed Urbino, rising from an easy chair, where pillows had supported his languid frame—"stay, I conjure you. Judge me not thus precipitately—condemn me not without fuller proof of guilt than mere conjecture. Believe, your suspicions are unjust, and that I am incapable of such conduct as you ascribe to me. In me conte Ariosto beholds a man of honour, who has presumed

to offer lady Victoria an undivided heart—a heart where she only reigns, where no other woman ever raised such tender interest—a heart (although contemned by you) proud in conscious rectitude, and, whilst it throbs with life, will beat with the most pure, most ardent, and unconquerable attachment to your sister." Urbino's feeble frame could no longer support exertion: he tottered, and fell into his chair. Alphonso, subdued by his situation, flew to his assistance.

"Forgive me," he cried, "if I have injured you. What, what could I think from all I have——?"

"Think!" interrupted Urbino in a faltering voice, but with impressive solemnity, "think that I am an unfortunate but not an unworthy man, doomed at present, and perhaps for ever, to forego the dearest hopes of my heart, and compelled to wear the appearance of duplicity, from which my nature shrinks; and that the amiable unfortunate Matilda has no claims upon me but those of pure unalterable friendship."

At this moment a folded paper fell from

above at the feet of Alphonso, who picked it up in surprise, and, not knowing what so strange a circumstance could mean, opened it, and saw a few words written in such unsteady characters, that he recognised not a man's writing; but supposing it from Matilda, still under the influence of her powerful agitation, and intended for Theodore, he felt painfully disconcerted, and without delay presented it, coldly saying—

"This aërial favour is, I believe, conte Urbino, intended for you."

Urbino looked on the paper; a flush of the most animated joy overspread his before pallid and agonised countenance; and in a voice tremulous with rapturous emotions he exclaimed, after a grateful apostrophe to Heaven—

"The moment of my acquittal is nearer than I could have dared to hope, my friend. This billet is from him whose disappearance caused me such misery and anguish. Soon, I now trust, shall I be absolved from my fatal promise—shall I learn the solution of many dreadful mysteries; and, assuming

my native ingenuousness, at length be allowed to appear to the sensitive brother of Victoria with a fame as spotless as his own."

"And until then," said conte Ariosto, "we will not meet. To me reserve with those I love is misery, and to suspect them death. I might prove but an insipid, nay, I fear, a sullen companion; imbibing prejudices and fancies which future years might not remove; and, with every trifle, feeding green and yellow monsters ungenial to peace and friendship. Whilst our hearts are thus barricadoed by that gloomy devil reserve we should prove but comfortless society to each other; but when this man of mystery, this cruel descendant of Harpocrates, unchains your tongue, and permits the secrets of your heart to flow into the bosom of friendship, summon me, and joyfully will I come."

"You are right," replied Urbino, "and we will not meet until I can dismantle from the black garb of mystery. The society of him who thinks he has reason to suspect my integrity would be tortures to me.

Therefore adieu, conte Ariosto. When next I see you, you shall know me for a man of honour, and I trust we shall meet as friends and brothers."

"And then," said conte Ariosto with a sweet conciliating smile, which found its way directly to the heart of Urbino, so strong was the resemblance it caused to Victoria, "and then, were we mussulmen, and that I had a hundred sisters, and every one a Victoria, I would give them all to you." And now, with a cordial and affectionate shake by the hand, the two friends parted.

Self-banished from Urbino, Alphonso now dedicated more of his time to Sebastian, who ever expressed anxiety for and pleasure in his visits: but in the apartments of Victoria he spent the chief part of his hours, affectionately attending her, beguiling her into taking food, playfully feeding her, reading to her, and striving to enliven her but too apparent sadness by the uncommon cheerfulness of his disposition.

In the chamber of Victoria was Matilda too almost constantly to be found; and to

emulate Alphonso in his tender care of his interesting sister, seemed this grateful and lovely young woman's anxious study. She would sweetly sing to her; draw in the most burlesque groupes all the grotesque and motley figures in the castle; tell her, with infinite humour and propriety, curious and entertaining anecdotes of the convent she had been educated in; watch every look of Victoria to anticipate her wishes, and do her some little act of attentive kindness. And yet Matilda was the detestation of conte Ariosto; scarcely could he command the natural urbanity of his heart, or the easy spontaneous politeness his intuitive feelings and the polish of high life inspired, to treat her with even that common civility which, as a woman, she claimed.

This extraordinary conduct in her beloved brother did not escape the observation of Victoria, who, shocked and grieved, anxiously sought for the cause, and was not slow in assigning one. From her attentive scrutiny, she learned that Matilda keenly felt the uncourteous conduct of Alphonso, without discovering any resentment, but

with patient mildness chased away the starting tear, and suppressed the convulsive sigh it ever occasioned, whilst in no other part of her conduct did she evince a similar meekness of spirit and forbearance; that whenever the name of Urbino was mentioned the eyes of Alphonso were invariably fixed, in scrutinising gaze, upon the blushing face of Matilda, overwhelming her with a painful degree of confusion she ever vainly endeavoured to conceal; that her vivacity, at first so conspicuous, was gradually forsaking her, her appetite fast declining, and each day her appearance betraying the new inroads of inquietude. By all this Victoria was convinced of Alphonso's being in the secret of Matilda's attachment to Theodore, and that she was painfully conscious of his being so.

To remain then longer in the castle, Victoria now considered as cruelty and injustice to the wronged Matilda, and reprehensible in every point of view; she determined at once to strain every faculty of mind and frame to enable her to pursue that path rectitude had pointed out to her:

and now, having a new project to occupy her thoughts, or at least to detach them in some degree from the misery of inaction, her languor seemed hourly to decrease, and every moment her strength appeared augmenting.

Alphonso was delighted by this auspicious change in his beloved sister; and expressing his feelings upon it to her, she informed him "that in a very few days she hoped to be sufficiently recovered to attempt a return to St. Marguerite's." Alphonso was rejoiced: he had long wished her removed from the castle, which for many reasons he considered an improper situation for her; and he was now impatient at being so long unsummoned by Urbino; of whom, in spite of every effort of partiality, suspicions were once more arising. Matilda, who was present, appeared sensibly affected at Victoria's intention, and after a painful pause, in which she had been endeavouring to suppress her feelings, mournfully said—

"Misfortune has too surely marked me for her own; or I should not so soon be deprived of that society I have long been

taught to wish for and to prize; and now, when experience has made me know how to appreciate its value, how keenly shall I feel its loss! But, lady Victoria, when you and Theodore are united, surrounded by friends, encompassed by happiness, by fortune's sweetest smiles, you will not, I trust, forget me; and when a child of sorrow shall cross your path, bestow one pitying sigh for the misfortunes of the forlorn deserted outcast, the still grateful though wretched Matilda." A flood of long-suppressed tears now burst from confinement; bitterly Matilda wept, and Victoria was dreadfully affected.

"Ah! lady Victoria," said Matilda, hastily wiping her tears away, and striving with all her power to regain her firmness, "I beg a thousand pardons for thus intruding my sorrows upon you. I have been long accustomed to the pangs of misfortune, and should by this time know better how to bear them." She paused a moment, and then, looking beseechingly at Victoria, continued, "Oh! that I dare ask you to take me with you! This will be an awkward shelter for

me when you are gone. No friend then left but Theodore, and he only for a short time; for, when he is able to travel, of course he will hasten after you: and beside, were he to remain here, the world might think him an improper guardian for me; though I well know he would do every thing that honour and humanity could inspire to save me from injury and sorrow. Signior Sebastian's connexions will call him far from hence; my guardian is gone, I fear me, for ever; and I shall then have no one here to—" The articulation of Matilda was painfully arrested; but with a determined effort of fortitude she hemmed away the feelings that arose almost to choke her, and she continued—

" The abbess of St. Marguerite's, I have heard you say, lady Victoria, is an estimable woman; and perhaps hereafter her humanity might be prevailed upon to admit me into her house. Yet how can I hope it? for, should my guardian never return—" Terrified at the idea she had thus awakened, Matilda paused, turned pale, and trembled.

Alphonso, not wishing that Matilda should

become the companion of his sister until every doubt and suspicion respecting her should be removed, eagerly interrupted Victoria, who was about to offer her an immediate asylum in her protection.

"But, donna Matilda, although your guardian may never return, you must surely have some other connexions in Spain, who, although not perhaps personally known to you, would be happy, upon your applying to them, to protect you? Why not retire immediately amongst your friends in the convent where you were educated? Why banish yourself from your family and connexions? Why wish to desert your native country?"

"Conte Ariosto," replied Matilda in a tone of the most touching sadness, "I have no friends, no connexions, no country. I know not the spot upon the surface of this globe which I can claim as the place of my nativity; nor is there a being upon earth that I know of to whom I can raise my supplicating hands, and say, "I belong to you—you have a right to shelter me." And with a look of the most piteous an-

guish she quitted her seat, and precipitately left the room, with a glow of wounded pride giving still greater interest to her lovely countenance, leaving both her auditors sensibly affected. And from that hour the conduct of Alphonso underwent a total revolution towards her; from that hour it became, like his manner to his sick sister, gentle, conciliating, attentive, and kind; solicitous to please, and fearing to give pain. Yet still the Matilda who threatened destruction to his sister's happiness was his aversion; but she was the child of misfortune, and he held her feelings sacred, while in conjunction with Victoria he determined to protect her.

Both brother and sister had powerful motives for not wishing Matilda, at this period, to be the companion of Victoria. Alphonso's we have already stated. Our heroine's were all that delicacy and generosity inspired, relative to her own situation, and Matilda's hopes of regaining the estranged affections of Urbino. But each concealed their reasons from the other; while, in concert, they determined to procure an imme-

diate asylum for Matilda in the convent where she had been educated; to make it signora Bernini's interest to remain with her as long as it should be found necessary; and at a future period, if she found no other more eligible protectors, to remove her to St. Marguerite's, or wherever she might then wish to go. Octavia joyfully accepted their advantageous proposals; and when their intentions were delicately made known to Matilda, she appeared almost wild with gratitude and joy.

CHAP. XIII.

ARRANGEMENTS were now rapidly making for Victoria's journey back to France, while each passing moment taught her more and more anxiety to be gone. She heard that conte Urbino was so much recovered as to be able to quit his chamber and visit Sebastian; that he had frequent meetings with Matilda, although he had not made a single effort to obtain an interview with her. A formal message of inquiry after her health, delivered by Diego, or the now happy Teresa, morning and evening, was all the notice he seemed now to bestow upon her; and even the little tender remembrances conveyed by Pierre and her brother from him to her had some time ceased to be repeated. Her heart was agonised, while reason told her that the wishes rectitude ought firmly to inspire were realising. Urbino was awakening from infatuation to justice and virtue. Sadly she sighed

acquiescence, while something like mortified pride, mingled with better feelings, urged her to depart.

Victoria doubted nothing of Alphonso's friendship, his judgment, or his delicacy; but, fearing the impetuosity of his ardent temper, she forbore to impart to him the misery that oppressed her: but, with the advice of Farinelli, she had reposed her full confidence in her old respected friend, the good and wise Alberti, who, a participator also in Alphonso's suspicions, applauded her laudable resolutions, and strengthened her in them by his counsels and his piety.

At length, the day preceding that appointed for our heroine's departure from the castle arrived—a day in which she found herself doomed to sustain one of the most severe and heart-rending trials she had ever experienced. She had informed Alberti and Ursuline, that, in her researches in the castle for her friends, a packet for conte di Urbino had been confided to her care, with awful and impressive injunctions to be herself the deliverer of it; and

although she considered the solemn request of a dying man too sacred to be disregarded, yet, situated as she was, she thought it could be no crime to delegate the important trust to her brother, who would execute it faithfully, and who, at the same time could, as her proper guardian, convey her rejection of conte di Urbino to him with more propriety than, in her delicate situation with him, she could possibly do. But Alberti, knowing the fermentation of Alphonso's ardent mind relative to Urbino and Matilda, feared the most fatal consequences from his interference, and therefore represented to Victoria, " that she was under the absolute necessity, from the awful nature of her implied promise to a dying man, of being herself the deliverer of the important packet; and owing such obligations as she did to conte di Urbino, he might consider it ungrateful to employ another, even a brother, in a business of so delicate, so mortifying a nature as her rejection of him."

Victoria thought Alberti too fastidious, but, with a mournful sigh, acquiesced in

his, to her terrible, decree. Well she knew what an agonising trial it would prove to her; but yet she hoped the power who actuated her conduct would sustain her through it. An interview with Urbino was therefore requested; and to the moment he was in Sebastian's study, the place appointed for this distressing meeting. Victoria heard him in the room some moments before she could collect sufficient firmness to appear to him. At length she entered from her own chamber, pale and trembling with the dreadful agitation of her mind, supported by the venerable Ursuline, who was to be the sole witness of their parting interview.

Victoria's eyes were fixed upon the floor. She could not raise them to look upon Urbino, whom she was about to give up for ever: but ere she was aware of his intention he was at her feet, attempting to speak of his obligations to her. But soon he found acute feeling the destroyer of eloquence, and he was at length compelled to a compliance with the entreaties of our heroine, to speak not upon a subject so

oppressive to her, nor thus to appreciate so far beyond its merit the little gratitude had led her to attempt for him to whom she owed more than life.

They all at last were seated. Urbino was silent, from wanting power to speak. A painful and embarrassing pause ensued, which, after several unsuccessful efforts, was broken, in a low and tremulous voice, by Victoria.

"Conte Urbino," she said, "I leave this castle to-morrow, on my return to St. Marguerite's, and therefore requested this interview, that I might deliver into your hands a sacred deposit. In my researches through this castle, Providence directed my footsteps to the couch of a dying man, who in the last moments of his life confided this packet to my care, with a solemn request to preserve it from the knowledge of every being until I could myself deliver it into your own hand. This important commission I should have sooner executed, but an opportunity was not given to me." Victoria presented the packet; and the moment Urbino's eyes glanced over the superscription,

the striking melancholy of his dejected countenance gave place to the most animated expression of joy, amazement, and rapture.

"O my Victoria!" he exclaimed, in a voice tremulous from excess of emotion, as he pressed with lively fervor to his lips the hand which gracefully gave up the important trust to him, "O my Victoria! Heaven has decreed you to be every way my preserver. You have rescued me from a dreadful death—you restore to me my hopes of happiness—for in this packet is, I doubt not, contained my fate—a solution of those mysteries which so long, so dreadfully have encompassed me. It will announce to me who I am, and what are my pretensions—it will restore me to the friendship of conte Ariosto—and, oh rapture! it will, I trust, allow me to plead my dearest hopes with you!" He paused for a moment, and then proceeded: "Permit my now retiring, lady Victoria, that I may learn the wondrous and important secrets this reveals—until I recover from the wild, the painfully rapturous emotions it has awakened: then will I see

conte Ariosto; then, sanctioned by him, will I present myself before you what I really am, and in my own character plead with Victoria for my happiness."

Victoria's soul was wrung with anguish: but though her heart might bleed, her senses sicken, she would not falter in her duty. Another interview she knew would be death to her: it was now but one more agonising effort, and all would be over, and her happiness gone for ever.

"Stay, conte di Urbino," she said, "one moment stay, and all will be terminated." She gasped for breath to proceed; her lips quivered, her before flushed cheek changed to the pallid hue of death. Tears, that would no longer be restrained, rolled down the cheeks of Ursuline. Urbino caught all the horrors of alarm: the chill of fear pervaded his whole frame, his swelling heart almost fluttered from its bounds, and he listened in breathless apprehension. She at length proceeded:—

"With difficulty can I repress emotions that seem to upbraid me with ingratitude: but let not my preserver condemn me for

the painfully ungracious effort I am doomed to make. Conte di Urbino"—The articulation of Victoria was now quick, low, and tremulous. "Conte di Urbino, I have well consulted the feelings of my heart; and although I find there gratitude, admiration, and esteem, in the most exalted degree for you, I, alas! also find, that an union with you could not bestow happiness upon me."

For many moments Theodore was unable to articulate; amazement, grief, and dismay convulsed his frame, and chained up all his faculties. At length he spoke, and in a tone so expressive of his misery, that the venerable Farinelli sobbed aloud, and the power which rectitude possessed over our heroine's mind alone preserved her from betraying to him the real situation of her heart.

"Lady Victoria," he said, "am I then indeed a wretch rejected by you, deprived at once of every ray of happiness that life e'er promised me? Oh! why, why did you then enter my dungeon, to snatch me from certain and immediate death, to doom me

thus to a lingering life of torture? Tears now gushed from his eyes, and in an agony of grief his head sunk upon the elbow of the couch on which he rested. A half-suppressed sob of Victoria's reached his ears, and roused at once his fortitude; he instantly arose from his seat, and in a graceful attitude of retreat he gently, sadly said—

"Forgive, I entreat, my thus distressing you. I wish not pity to effect for me what affection has denied me. I have no right to complain, still less to upbraid you. My self-love flattered me into destructive delusions, and perhaps I am justly punished for my presumption. But indeed I thought," and his voice fell to a cadence of such touching pathos, it thrilled to Victoria's very soul, "I thought, in the fleeting moments of receding life, when extended upon my bed of straw within my wretched cell, I thought a voice (whose tones my heart can never, never cease to vibrate) breathed one short sentence, which called me back to life, to hope, to happiness. It sounded sweetly round my bed of sickness: it

nursed, it soothed, it cherished me. It led me back to health:—and now, the most fascinating form that fancy ever pourtrayed a vision in, dissolves, and leaves me wretched!"

Victoria threw herself into the arms of Ursuline, and sobbed upon the bosom of her venerable friend. Urbino took her trembling hand.

"Why, oh! why, lady Victoria," said he, "if my wretchedness can thus affect you, why do you banish me from you, and consign me thus to misery? But I see, I know too well the cause. You believe me unworthy. Some strange suspicion of my honour has found an entrance into your ingenuous bosom. Even on that—oh! how I vainly thought auspicious day your faithless guardian gave you to me, I saw some dreadful doubts of my rectitude stole into your mind; and its visible effects, as we drove from the château of de Montfort, gave a mortal blow to my peace; and certainly, most certainly, since you suspect my integrity, you ought to reject me. The house of Ariosto claims alliance with spotless ho-

nour—Victoria di Modena with every virtue under heaven."

"Oh! no, no, conte di Urbino," replied our dreadfully agitated heroine, summoning, with all the forces of her mind, sufficient fortitude to proceed in this agonising conflict, "I doubt not your honour; I believe you as perfectly amiable as my own brother, but I cannot be your wife. Farewell, then, my highly-esteemed friend; and when you visit Alphonso in Tuscany, I hope—I trust—I shall see you happy—as Heaven knows I wish you." She arose to depart. Urbino looked mournfully at her—

"Happy!" he repeated in a tone of deep despair: "No, Victoria, never, never."—Leaning upon the arm of signora Farinelli, Victoria with tremulous steps moved towards her chamber. Urbino, at once deprived of fortitude, darted after her, and grasped her hand.

"Oh stay, Victoria, stay!" he exclaimed, in the broken voice of anguish—"I only ask, my life, my love, my preserver, my wife—I only ask one moment's stay ere you rob me of peace for ever."

Victoria could no longer sustain the heart-rending conflict; but, breaking from his convulsed grasp, rushed into her chamber, closed the door, and, sinking upon her knees, fervently implored Heaven to spare her senses to her through the mental sufferings she was doomed to, and to grant her resignation to bear her fate with firmness. And in about two hours after this severe trial, when conte Ariosto, unacquainted with the occurrences of the morning, entered his sister's chamber, and saw the mournful serenity of Victoria's countenance, mingled with an expression of celestial sweetness so affecting, he could scarcely withstand the impulse of folding her in his arms, and weeping over her, through sympathy awakened for he knew not what.

CHAP. XIV.

ALPHONSO told our heroine, that he had been detained from her so long by being engaged making arrangements for the most effectual methods of recompensing those people about the castle who had been kind and serviceable to her. Victoria threw her arms about his neck, and burst into tears.

"Why so easily affected, my beloved Victoria?" said he, tenderly kissing away the falling tears. "Ah! I fear my sister is not happy—that she has some secret grief which she conceals from me."

"When we are at Palino together," said she, faintly smiling, "I will disclose every secret of my heart to you."

"And then," he replied with fervor, "if the exertions of an affectionate brother can promote your happiness, my Victoria's bosom shall be the mansion of tranquillity."

Farinelli now turned the conversation upon the plan of their approaching journey; and, after discussing the different arrangements for some time, Victoria told Alphonso she must visit Sebastian before her departure, to thank him for his past kindness, to entreat a continuation of his friendship, and to request him to visit her at the castle of Palino when she should be settled there. "Will you, my Alphonso," continued she, "be the bearer of my mission to him? Will you request permission for me to take my coffee with him this evening, should he have engaged no other company?"

"I will go," returned Alphonso smiling: "but is this all my embassy? Have I no other assignation to make for my sister with any other gentleman? Will not Urbino, think you, be jealous? Come, come, for once do violence to your inclinations; extend your charity to that poor fellow, and grant him the mighty boon of a parting interview."

"I have seen conte Urbino. Our part-

ing interview is over," said Victoria in a faltering voice, and with an unconquerable look of anguish that instantly gave alarm to the ardent affectionate temper of Alphonso; whose agitated manner and incoherent expressions gave, in return, such alarm to her heart, that, fearing the mischief of misconception, where conjecture and a confused idea of facts were the only guides, she gave up at once the thought of further concealment, and revealed to her brother every secret of her heart, every motive which actuated her conduct.

Victoria's gentle, generous representations hushed every hostile thought within Alphonso's bosom, whilst they called forth exultation that such a being was his sister, and grief that her virtues were called upon to sacrifice her peace; and while he applauded the delicate, generous motive that withheld Victoria's mentioning Matilda to Urbino, as the cause of her rejection of him, he felt firmly persuaded of Matilda's being unworthy of such generosity, such delicate consideration. He believed her arts and blandishments had ensnared in some suc-

cessful toil the honour of Urbino, whose affections, he doubted not, were fixed upon Victoria; and so anxious was he for the happiness of his sister, so partially inclined to Urbino, he would, in spite of every argument circumstances presented against him, preserve the latent hope that Urbino would confirm his own assertions, and ere long evince himself a man of unblemished honour: and these flattering hopes his sanguine mind encouraged he would fain have transplanted to his sister's bosom; but with infinite concern he soon found his efforts all were vain. The mournful, placid smile of resignation, that beamed on Victoria's face, told him she cherished no hope; and saying he would go on her embassy to Sebastian, Alphonso tenderly pressed her hand, and precipitately retired to hide the tear of painful sympathy that trembled in his eyes. In the library he met Matilda, who with a countenance expressive of grief and anxiety was hurrying to the chamber of Victoria.

"May I ask whither Donna Matilda is hastening?" said Alphonso, who guessed

that her presence could not at this moment prove a source of pleasure to Victoria. "If to my sister, I am sorry to prevent your kindly intended visit: but she is now a little indisposed, and cannot have the pleasure of seeing you: even I am forced to leave her."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Matilda in a voice of distress, "not see me! To-morrow she leaves the castle; and if I cannot see her, what will become of Theodore?"

Alphonso was startled. "May I, who am flattered by my sister's confidence, now answer as her representative, and relieve your apparent distress?"

"Oh, no, no! you possess not her feeling, her sensibility; and my business is to awaken them, to plead for Theodore, whom she has rejected and made wretched. Little, little did I imagine lady Victoria could have done this. Oh! how fondly did I flatter myself that Theodore was not doomed to sigh in hopelessness, and that all lady Victoria did for him were proofs of the most tender attachment!"

"Oh most consummate hypocrite!" thought Alphonso: then, fixing his penetrating eyes full upon Matilda's blushing face, he spoke with striking emphasis—

"Is it possible that Donna Matilda can feel distress at my sister's rejection of conte Urbino, when rumor strongly reports the fair Matilda's having a friend whose claims upon the heart of conte Urbino are prior to my sister's?"

Matilda's face changed from a bright tint of vermilion to the pale hue of death; her bosom heaved covulsively; and, after a painful pause, she with difficulty articulated—

"Rumor could only glance at *me*:—but know, conte Ariosto, although I own that I love Urbino with the tenderest affection, neither the bribes of fortune nor the pangs of torture should force me to be his wife. I estimate Theodore beyond any other mortal; nay, I almost adore his virtues: yet, even were I not conscious of the strength, the tenderness of his unalienable attachment to lady Victoria di Modena, I would sooner expire by every pang that cruelty

could torture me with than unite myself with him." An unequivocal expression of horror now assumed its empire over her agitated countenance, and she trembled to such excess, she was forced to lean against a pillar for support. Alphonso was more amazed than ever; and, though lost in vague conjecture, he kindly took her death-cold hand, and led her to a seat.

"Forgive, I entreat," said he, "my thus distressing you. I wish not to pain your sensibility, nor to penetrate into mysteries you may perhaps be forbidden to reveal. Idle curiosity does not prompt my inquiry. The happiness of Urbino urges me to——." At this moment the venerable Anselmo entered the library, the traces of tears still visible upon his highly flushed cheeks, and his agitated frame and countenance betraying the most striking emotion.

"Donna Matilda," said this amiable old man, "I am commissioned to request your presence in the chamber of your friend Sebastian, where some important intelligence awaits you; to receive which, my daughter, I would have you summon all your forti-

tude. How to brave misfortunes you have already learned; but how to bear prosperity and happiness, are tasks almost too arduous for your years."

"Are happiness and prosperity to be the lot of Theodore?" exclaimed Matilda in a voice of impetuous emotion.

"I trust they are," replied the monk.

"Then let me fly to gratulate him," said she, wildly grasping the good Anselmo's arm. Conte Ariosto hastened into the dining-parlour, and met her with a glass of water, which he persuaded her to drink; and, as he kindly supported her through the hall, said to the reverend Anselmo—

"I was going, holy father, on a mission from my sister to signior Sebastian, but find this would be an improper season."

"In a few hours hence," replied Anselmo, "he will, I trust, be better able to receive you. In truth, conte Ariosto, he is now unnerved—unfitted for society. Tell the amiable lady Victoria, Heaven has decreed, that through her means the innocent will regain their rights, and a good man be restored to happiness."

"And tell her from me," said Matilda emphatically, "that Theodore deserves her; and if she regards her own happiness, she will revoke the harsh, the cruel sentence of this morning."

They now reached the staircase, which the agitated monk and Matilda tremulously ascended; while Alphonso hastily returned to our heroine, to whom he imparted all that had occurred in this interview with Matilda and Anselmo.

CHAP. XV.

A RAY of that hope our heroine had long refused to cherish now sprung up in her heart; but although it warmed her care-chilled bosom, and gave her comfort, she feared to allow it too much influence, and checked its progress as it seemed to gather strength; but fervently breathed her silent aspirations to Heaven, that, whatever her fate might be, the fame of Urbino might be found immaculate: and now, under the equal dominion of hope and fear, her nervous system became so sensitive, she started at every noise, trembled at every sound, and with a palpitating heart sat in the painful expectation of some decisive explanation. But dinner-time at length arrived, and no intelligence from Urbino; neither did Matilda appear, who had for many preceding days dined with Victoria and her

party in the apartment known to our reader as Sebastian's study. Politeness demanded that Matilda should be apprized of dinner's being ready. Roselia was dispatched to her apartment with the information, and soon returned with Matilda's excuse; who, overpowered by a recent important discovery, was unfit to appear in company, and wished to remain alone until she could resume her banished composure.

Victoria partook not of the meal that was set before her, nor did her anxious friends evince much appetite; and the moment Alphonso arose from table, he proceeded to Sebastian's chamber, but was not admitted. Father Pierre had administered a potent soporific to Sebastian, to quiet his agitated nerves, and who, in consequence, was in a profound sleep, and Urbino watching by his pillow.

Octavia, at Victoria's request, went to offer her attentions to Matilda, whom she found much agitated, and still wishing to remain alone, but very grateful for Victoria's kindness, and to whom she sent an affectionate message, with an earnest en-

treaty to be allowed to see her ere her departure from the castle.

The evening passed heavily on in the apartment of our heroine, where expectation sat painfully awake, and each passing moment bringing disappointment with it; until towards its close, when the venerable Anselmo entered with a message from Sebastian to Victoria and Alphonso, requesting to see them in the morning. They promised to attend his summons, and the holy man retired without imparting a sentence relative to the late discovery; but in a few minutes after he was gone, the following billet from Urbino was delivered to conte Ariosto.

"The fatal, fatal blow this day given to my peace, with a recent wonderful and important discovery, totally unfit me for seeing you this night; but by to-morrow I hope to have recovered a little of that fortitude which has deserted me in the most trying moment of my life. To-morrow, then, I shall request that interview you promised me; when I trust that, although the en-

vied name of brother is by my cruel destiny denied to me, you will own I can claim, without degrading you, the valued title of your friend. URBINO."

A glow of the most animated pleasure illumed the fine countenance of Alphonso as he read this billet, which he hastened to give Victoria, whose face, as she perused it, was suffused with the liveliest glow of joy and exultation. Her wishes were realised; and, whatever his situation with Matilda might be, the honour of Urbino would be proved unblemished. Now hope, in defiance of the cold efforts of reason, emanated through her breast, and her smiles were unconsciously robbed of their pensive sadness: but as upon the basis of hope alone this consolatory structure sprung, a sleepless night destroyed great part of the air-built fabric. Fear awakened doubt; and pale, languid, and unrefreshed, she arose from her pillow.

Scarcely had our heroine finished the form of sitting at the breakfast-table, when the good Anselmo appeared, to conduct

her and her brother to Sebastian, who was anxiously waiting to receive them. Victoria, leaning upon Alphonso's arm, with a bounding heart and tremulous steps measured her way to that well-known chamber, where the first object that now struck her view was the dejected Urbino seated by the easy chair of her venerable friend—Urbino, who had, at the peril of his life, rescued her in that very chamber from destruction. The tender feelings awakened by this remembrance at once subdued her, and, bursting into tears, she sunk into the nearest seat. Matilda, whom she had not before observed, now ran to her, and, throwing her arms around Victoria's neck, mingled her tears with hers; until, seeming suddenly to recollect herself, she suppressed her own tears, brought our heroine a glass of water, and then conducted her to Sebastian, who, sensibly affected, pressed Victoria to his bosom with paternal tenderness.

"My child! my preserver!" he exclaimed, the moment his excessive agitation would allow him to speak—"preserver of my

house, of all my treasure! how can I find power to thank you?" Tears streamed down Sebastian's cheeks; and Victoria, greatly affected, entreated him to speak no more upon a subject too oppressive to his feeling heart: then, gently disengaging herself from his ardent embrace, she took a seat beside him, and, calling up all the energies of her mind, strove to appear composed. Sebastian gazed wistfully at her, then mournfully upon Urbino: at length he sadly said—

"When language was formed, such actions as Victoria's were unknown, and words were not made to express the acknowledgments she merits: but, poor silly dotard that I am, I fondly thought she loved my boy, and that an union with him would be the highest recompense that Heaven could bestow upon a mortal; but this vain hope, like every other joy through life, my cruel unrelenting destiny decrees I must forego."

"But, with all due submission to this implacable destiny of yours, my good signior, we will not *quite* forego this hope,"

said Alphonso, with an animated smile of fascinating benignity: "hope shall plume upon my crest, determination and perseverance shall be my attendants, whenever his catholic majesty pays the just tribute to my superlative merit, of raising me to the rank of generalissimo; and never will I raise a siege, or give up an attack, because a few paltry barriers impede my way."

Urbino squeezed the hand of Alphonso with a grateful pressure; while Matilda, darting from the side of Victoria, caught his other, and pressed it to her lips; then hastily let it drop, and, blushing at what her impetuous feelings urged her to, retired behind Sebastian's chair in pitiable confusion.

Victoria and Alphonso were affected by the action of one, and amazed at that of the other; while Sebastian, looking affectionately upon Alphonso, feelingly said—

"Not more in face and figure, than in sentiments and manner, do you resemble your noble father."

"You then knew my father?"

"I did," returned Sebastian with a deep-

drawn sigh: then turning to Victoria, he continued—"I wished to see you before you went from hence, my child, to give you my blessing ere we parted, and to afford your noble, generous, feeling heart the transport of hearing all the blessings you have heaped upon your friend Sebastian. Heaven knowing the powers of your mind, Victoria, assigned to you the arduous undertaking of rescuing an honourable family from the machinations of villany, of deadly diabolical vengeance, which for years pursued them with implacable severity, depriving them of peace, of hope, of every comfort under heaven! To you, then, we owe our lives, our restoration to virtuous society, to honourable rank. To you the happy father is indebted for the recovery of his children, of whom he was by cruelty bereft for twenty years! Yes, my beloved Victoria, to you I owe the transport of knowing I am not the desolate being I long believed myself—of knowing I am not childless—since this dear boy, this lovely girl, are mine."

Tears, awakened by a variety of sensa-

tions, prevented Sebastian from proceeding; while Victoria, starting from her seat in violent emotion, caught his trembling hand, and with difficulty articulated—

"Theodore and Matilda *both* your children?"

"Yes," replied Sebastian, "*both* my children, the children of my Viola."

A momentary suspension stole over the faculties of Victoria, who fell into the arms of her watchful brother; but soon recovering, she beheld the almost agonised solicitude of Urbino, who, with Matilda, was using every restorative they could find for her recovery. She could no longer bear to see the wretchedness of Urbino; she reached out her hand to him.

"Forgive me," she cried, "forgive my injustice, my ingratitude. I threw a dark shade over the perfections of your mind;—I believed——" She could not proceed; but, bursting into tears, hid her blushing face upon the bosom of her brother. The emotions of Urbino's mind were too powerful to admit of his uttering a single word, but his eyes spoke eloquently.

" My good friends," said Alphonso, hiding his sensibility under the veil of cheerfulness, " I rejoice exceedingly at your both being, so opportunely for me, struck dumb, as it will allow me to take a speaking part in this most sublime drama, wherein I was beginning to feel the future generalissimo of Spain a mighty useless insignificant sort of personage: but now listen to my oration with all due respect and attention.—My friends and fellow citizens!—" and here, although playfully delivered, conte Ariosto sketched, with delicacy and precision, all the circumstances and motives which actuated his sister in her rejection of conte di Urbino.

Scarcely had Alphonso arrived at his concluding sentence, when the enraptured Urbino burst forth in an exclamation of admiration at this further proof of the purity of Victoria's mind; for Urbino could not but approve the motives, although he had so severely suffered from the effects of her rectitude.

" Nay," exclaimed Alphonso, affecting to look sulky: " I shall never forgive this

mortifying interruption to the first long speech I ever uttered. Now I shall never be able to take up the thread of my oration, wherein I was going to pourtray, in proper form and order, all the fair heroine's sufferings upon the heroic occasion; how many crystal tears she shed, how many deep-drawn sighs she heaved, how many sleepless nights she numbered; how suspicion, that discordant miscreant, stole too into her brother's mighty breast; how that magnanimous hero fumed, and how he fretted too; how sentimentally she fainted, how exquisitely she blushed, how pathetically she wept, and how—Donna Matilda, must not that come next?—how tenderly the reconciled lovers kissed, and were sworn friends for ever."

"Victoria," said Sebastian, whom the intentional rhodomontade of Alphonso allowed time to recall his firmness, "my amiable, my beloved Victoria will no longer then, I trust, prove the destroyer of my dear boy's peace."

Victoria, raising her head from the bosom of her brother, affectionately took the

hand of Sebastian, and said, while the sweetest blushes of timid hope and joy animated her lovely countenance—

"Intercede, my dear signior, with your son, to forgive my injustice; and assure him, that in giving pain to him I inflicted *misery* upon myself."

Urbino caught her with ardor to his breast. "Victoria, you then are mine!" Victoria could not speak: her cheeks were suffused with the sweetest tints of lovely modesty: her eyes sought the ground; but she smiled, and that smile spoke volumes to the bounding heart of Urbino.

"Victoria yours! Not she indeed," exclaimed Alphonso, endeavouring to hide how sensibly he was affected; "for it was only yesterday she told me she would have your marriage annulled."

"And to-day, my brother," she timidly replied, "I tell you that I would not have it broken for any other blessing the world could give me."

"Nor Theodore, if I may augur from the manifesto of his joyful eyes, to be made emperor of the moon. Nor I, if I may trust

the bounding ecstacy of my heart, to be made the husband of the infanta. Nor would signior Sebastian, I think, have it broken to be instituted an inquisitor; nor donna Matilda, I am certain, to be made a nun. So, as we all agree upon being exquisitely happy at my sister's caprice, I trust the effect of that happiness may influence the recovery of signior Sebastian, and enable us all shortly to reach Tuscany together." Alphonso now changed from levity of manners, as he proceeded respectfully to address Sebastian.

"As the brother of Victoria, signior, I must lay some claim to your esteem; and as her natural protector, I hope you will not think me presuming if I hasten to speak my wishes. My leave of absence from my regiment does not extend to a very distant period. I therefore am anxious to get to the castle of Palino, that I may be present at the nuptials of my sister, and have them celebrated there in the *palazzo* of her forefathers, in a manner becoming her rank and my affection for her; and when I have made my necessary arrangements in Tuscany

(where I have not been since I became of age), when I can leave my Victoria at Palino, safe in the protection of my estimable friend, her amiable husband, and in your society, signior, and that of your lovely daughter, I shall return to my regiment, with nothing to think of but to acquire laurels and a truncheon."

"And when you know who the happy husband of your inestimable sister is, my dear Alphonso," said Sebastian with solemn and impressive dignity, "I trust he will not lose a particle of that friendship which your noble heart and ardent temper are anxious to evince, because you think him poor and friendless. Nor will my Victoria love her husband less, I trust, when she finds herself not united to Theodore conte di Urbino, the humble dependant and reputed nephew of conte di Vicenza, but to Orlando di Treviso, marchese of Palermo, the heir of the long dormant title and usurped lands of Manfredonia;—nor look upon me with less affection, when she knows me for the earliest, dearest friend her father had;—when my beloved child hears, that in seeing me she be-

holds the unfortunate Lorenzo duca di Manfredonia, so long by the world numbered with the dead."

Alphonso and Victoria, from the same intuitive impulse, sunk instantly upon their knees before him, and pressed his trembling hands with fervor to their lips, bathing them with tears of genuine sensibility; while they earnestly entreated a blessing from him whose memory, next to their own parents, they had been taught to love and venerate. Urbino and Matilda too sunk upon their knees to share in the solemn benediction of their agitated father, who, when he had tenderly and fervently blessed all these his children, requested them to leave him.

"All-subdued," he said, "by some of the most powerful emotions that can agitate the human breast, we require some little time to compose our amazed senses; to reflect upon the wonders, the mercies of Providence, so lately evinced to us; and to recall that firmness necessary to support us through the afflicting, nay agonising recital I have to make, and you to hear. Let us then all separate for a time. In the even-

ing return to me, when to you, dear children of my matchless friend, I will relate the narrative of my calamities; disclose the wonders of that important packet Providence led our beloved preserver, our own Victoria, to find for us; and teach you the dreadful knowledge of the depravity of those your virtuous unsuspicious hearts so long respected."

The wishes of the duca were instantly complied with by these his amiable and obedient children; and Victoria, alone and in her own chamber, delayed not to return a pious and fervent thanksgiving to Almighty Providence for all its late and promised future blessings to her. She next joined her Ursuline in Sebastian's study, where she hastened to make the heart of her venerable friend as joyful as her own, by her happy communications. But their *tête-à-tête* was soon interrupted by our hero, who had in vain endeavoured to becalm his agitated spirits, and resolved at length, if he could not be composed, at least he would be happy; and to seek that society which he thought could only make him so, he entered

Sebastian's study, with a heart full and a countenance expressive of very different sensations from those that agitated him when last he quitted it, and where, too, his reception now bore not much similitude.

The smiling graces, so long banished from Victoria's countenance, now gently glided back to their fascinating dimpled stations. The bright prospects so unexpectedly and suddenly opened to Orlando (for as Orlando marchese of Palermo will our reader henceforth know him) animated too his face and conversation. Farinelli could scarcely believe that sickness, languor, and misery, had so lately been the companions of either. They talked of their present happiness, their past sorrows. Orlando recounted minutely his first beholding Victoria, and all his subsequent devices to obtain another and still another view; described most eloquently the progress of his attachment; the hopes and fears her conduct and emotions had from time to time inspired; and deeply engaged by the fascination of this (to them) interesting conversation, they wandered intuitively away

from Farinelli into the library, from thence into the piazza, and at length on into the garden, unconscious of the extent of their ramble or the flight of time, until Diego appeared to summon them to dinner. The most ardent joy sat conspicuous upon his intelligent countenance; while in a highly respectful manner he informed them that conte Ariosto had done him the honour of telling him why his lady's journey from Spain was postponed, and that he sincerely hoped their happiness might be equal to his joy."

Victoria and Orlando both, as if actuated by the same impulse at the same instant, reached out a hand to him.

"You will still follow our fortunes, Diego," exclaimed they. "You will not, my friend, regard me less when you behold me the wife of your beloved long regretted favourite," said Victoria.—"And you will now love me for my Victoria's sake, as well as for my own," Orlando continued.

Diego pressed their respective hands with fervor to his heart, bowed profoundly, but could not articulate one word in all the

long way he preceded them to the castle; at the entrance of which they were met by Roselia, who, with gestures strongly approaching to phrensy, offered her congratulations in the strange ungraceful mixture of half-articulated expressions of joy, with tears and smiles, sobs and laughter: and the gratulations of the good Alberti, Pierre, and Octavia, were also received with genuine satisfaction, because they sprung from the hearts of sincerity and friendship.

The ecstasies of poor Thomas, upon hearing of who his beloved captain Theodore really was, exceed our powers of description; he capered, sung, roared, shouted, huzzaed, winked, wept, and swore; trod on the toes of a dozen inquisitors; kicked the shins of half a score officials, in these his effusions of joy; and, in his sympathetic glee, hugged and kissed poor old Teresa so cordially, that he almost smothered her with his turbulent raptures.

As to poor Teresa, she wept for joy "that her child, her lovely and beloved Theodore, was at last to be known for a grandee, and

to be married to the most beautiful, amiable, and kind-hearted donna the sun ever shone upon."

Early in the evening were the blushing Victoria and the enraptured half-abashed Orlando relieved from the teasing mirthful raillery of Alphonso, by a summon to the duca, whom they found sadly but interestingly collected and composed. Quickly, as if fearing to lose that portion of firmness which his piety had gained for him, he entered upon the promised narrative; but which we shall ourselves take the liberty of relating, as we can, by combining other histories with that recounted by the duca, all equally necessary to elucidating many incidents in the foregoing pages, rescue our kind reader from the tediousness of "a twice-told tale."

CHAP. XVI.

ANGELINA and Julia di Rossano were two of the most lovely women that Sicily ever boasted. They sprung from a noble though not affluent family; and at a period little advanced from infancy these beautiful sisters had been bequeathed by their sole surviving parent (a bigoted mother) to the care of the abbadessa of a convent of Carmelite nuns at Palermo.

In obedience to the will of their deceased parents they were educated for the conventual life; and their pious and faithful guardian determined, that at the age of eighteen they should each assume the sacred vow. So long initiated in the mysteries of a monastic life, they became completely weary of it by the time Angelina attained her sixteenth year; when she formally announced to her guardian her fixed determination against ever fulfilling the arbitrary will of her parent.

The pious mother was amazed, was shocked, was dismayed, at such impious, such dreadful disobedience. The holy fathers attached to that convent, all the ecclesiastics in Sicily, were appealed to. They thundered anathemas against the apostate girl, inflicted heavy penances, and bewildered her by all the perplexities of bigotry and ignorant theological controversy. Their displeasure and their penances, however severe, Angelina submitted to with the most philosophic resignation; nor could their elaborate disquisitions make the smallest impression upon her mind—probably because she could scarcely comprehend them. All she perfectly understood of the matter in question were her own feelings, which determined her to undergo every punishment the phrensy of the furious zealots might inflict, sooner than present herself a perjured votary at the altar of her Creator.

This extraordinary controversy between the ecclesiastic power and a girl of sixteen filled the city of Palermo with astonishment, and formed the favourite topic of disquisi-

tion at every *conversazioni* in the place. The youth, beauty, and fortitude of Angelina gained her universal partisans among the young, while the old expressed censures rather than admiration at her conduct.

The archbishop of Montreal was the only one among the Sicilian prelates who acted the liberal, upright, and unprejudiced adviser. He was a learned, just, and truly pious man, and his opinions were only understood and received with reverence by Angelina. With him she held long and frequent conferences; and at length, instead of his gaining a proselyte, Angelina convinced him of the propriety of the determination she had formed. His influence, which was great, was all exerted to hush the storms of bigotry against her. In a short time, by his means, the contest was given up: Angelina and Julia were to remain as boarders in the convent, under the protection of their guardian, but no compulsive measures were to be used to enforce their acquiescence in the will of their mother. Unmolested were they to continue there, and either to take the veil or not

as inclination might prompt them at a future period.

The marchese of Palermo, then in his twenty-second year, was one of the handsomest as well as the most fascinating men of his time. Such was his exterior:—but far, infinitely far from estimable was his disposition; for he was profligate, capricious, violent in temper, vain to excess, and passionately fond of notoriety. At the house of his maternal uncle, the archbishop of Montreal, he several times saw the lovely sisters during this memorable controversy. The mild and interesting sweetness of the timid Julia charmed his fancy and captivated his heart; but the majestic, spirited Angelina was enrolled in flaming characters in the brightest records of fame. She was the admiration of all the young and gay at Palermo, and the palm of beauty had been adjudged to her from her sister by general consent. To wed Angelina would be exactly that kind of *éclat* his heart panted for. His name coupled with Angelina di Rossano's would indeed be notoriety. In vain did his heart whisper that he should

be happier with Julia. Vanity was arbitrary, and affection disregarded. In the semblance then of all that was amiable and seductive he presented himself as the most passionate lover to the beautiful, ingenuous, and susceptible Angelina; who, completely deceived, bestowed upon him her tenderest affections, and very shortly after became his wretched wife.

Even before they arose from the altar the infatuation of vanity was past; for, while the archbishop of Montreal was piously pronouncing the nuptial benediction, the marchese looked upon the bewitching face of Julia, then animated as he had never before beheld it. She was breathing the most fervent aspirations for the happiness of her beloved sister. Alas! poor Julia had no presentiment that she was to prove the fatal bane to that happiness. From this moment the marchese considered his beauteous inestimable bride as the blighter of his peace. She became his detestation; and shortly after, when Julia bestowed her heart and hand upon a truly amiable young Englishman, lord Frederic Stanhope (the youngest

of the then duke of Riversdale's sons), the phrensy of the marchese of Palermo's rage and envy broke through all bounds; concealment was no more; and he had the inhumanity to tell the dismayed Angelina, that she was the destruction of his happiness, his detestation, his torment,—while his tenderest affections had been, from the moment of first beholding her, irrevocably devoted to her sister.

From that moment the thread of the marchesa's health was snapped, and the fire of her vivacity extinguished by grief and horror. The soul of lively graceful animation, that had inspirited all her actions, and made her the fascinating admiration of every circle, fled for ever. In one dreadful moment all of hope, of joy, of happiness, was wrecked. Not a complaint, not a murmur, broke from her lips; but misery found an everlasting mansion in her bosom. Her air became at once dejected. Sorrow and patience sat touchingly blended upon her brow; and her once so arch and playful smiles were now so mournful, yet so sweet and resigned, they called forth the

spontaneous tear of sympathy; and her melodious voice was from henceforth attuned by the most melting tones of sadness.

The happy Julia was gone with her adoring husband to England: but even had she remained in Sicily, her society could now, alas! no longer prove a consolation to Angelina, who, before she attained her seventeenth year, had every comfort in life torn from her but the friendship of the archbishop of Montreal, and the maternal tenderness which her child, the infant Viola, called forth. The birth of this babe, the mother's only joy, gave additional force to the father's hatred. Influenced by his constitutional caprice, because his child was a daughter he wished for a son; and enraged at what he fancied a dreadful disappointment, he, in the injustice of his phrensy accusing his wife and child as the source of all his sorrows, banished them both from his house and protection; when, under the auspices of the amiable and benevolent archbishop, they took refuge in a Benedictine convent dedicated to S. Rosolia, a short distance from the city of Palermo, while the marchese

continued to pass his time in a manner that sunk him lower and lower in the estimation of all good men.

The amiable archbishop undertook to superintend the education of this discarded child; and, with the assistance of her highly-informed and accomplished mother, and with proper aid from Palermo, this lovely plant of paternal hate was reared and brought to perfection before her unnatural father ever beheld her.

The family of lord Frederic Stanhope received Julia with civility, but never with cordiality. She was a foreigner, a catholic, and her fortune was small. The duke of Riversdale was avaricious, was national to illiberality, and believed the professor of every religion but his own must be devoid of virtue. Frederic was his favourite child: that partiality induced him to forgive his marriage, and receive his wife: but not even that partiality, nor Julia's perfections, could conquer his deep-rooted prejudices. Every individual of the family formed their conduct by his grace's: the lovely interesting Julia was no favourite amongst them:

but the energy of her husband's character, and the high estimation his country held him in, enforced respect to his adored Julia from every person who approached her, so long as he was spared to protect her. But he had chosen the naval profession; his country often called him from his Julia; and in five years after their union he fell, crowned with laurels, conquering a force far superior to that which he commanded.

The affliction of Julia was proportionate to the tender affection she bore him, and the loss she sustained in being deprived of such a husband, such a protector; and the only consolation she had left prejudice threatened to tear from her. Her only surviving child, the little Clementina, it was decreed by the inflexible grandfather, must be taken from her papist mother, and reared in the persuasion of her father. This was a fell blow to the already breaking heart of Julia. Her child to be taken from her and bred a heretic! and neither in this life nor the next could she more hope to behold her husband or her child! While her Frederic lived, happiness had prevented her

reverting deeply to the horrors of future separation; but now he was gone, and she had not the hope to console her of future meeting. All the horrors of the catholic persuasion, in their belief of heretical perdition, now fastened upon her mind, shattered her frame, and tortured her heart to direst anguish. Her confessor was her adviser; and he had many counsellors among the bigots of his faith which London contained, by whom poor Julia was at length persuaded to forego the maternal transports of her child's presence, to ensure her eternal salvation.

The crafty priest secretly and dexterously conveyed the beautiful and engaging little Clementina, then in her fourth year, from the arms of her doting heart-broken mother to the city of Palermo, where he carefully delivered up his charge to the archbishop of Montreal, to whose protection Julia had confided her child. And in a few months after, this amiable, lovely, unfortunate young woman fell, in the prime of beauty, a martyr to bigotry—friendless, forlorn, persecuted by her husband's family

with increasing cruelty to enforce confession of the place of her child's concealment, and far from her native country, a return to which a dreadful interdict in her husband's will prevented; for in his professional excursions he had visited Palermo after his marriage, and had learned from the archbishop of Montreal the fatal cause of the unfortunate disunion of the marchese and marchesa of Palermo. The dreadful pang which such intelligence would inflict he spared his Julia, resolving during her youth, or the existence of the marchese, never to allow her to revisit Sicily: and to prevent her doing so, should she survive himself, he left in his will a solemn request to her not to visit her native country until she had attained her fortieth year. And as he forbore to assign any cause for this extraordinary request, Julia considered it only as inspired by a degree of that national prejudice so conspicuous in the rest of her Frederic's family; and although she would have given worlds to accompany her child to Sicily, to weep upon the sympathising bosom of her Angelina (who she

had heard from others, but never from herself, was an unhappy wife), and to commit herself solely to the guidance of her revered friend the archbishop, yet she acquiesced without murmuring in a request that added, as she thought, affliction to her sorrows, but which in fact spared her the torturing pang of knowing she had, though innocently, caused her sister's misery.

The convent of St. Rosolia was also the asylum of the lovely interesting Clementina, to whom the good archbishop proved a kind and faithful guardian; while the affectionate heart of Angelina prompted her to bestow every attention, every endearment upon Clementina that could possibly make up to her in any degree for the loss of that maternal tenderness she doubted not the sweet child would have received from her absent mother, for whom Angelina retained the most ardent and unalterable affection; for whose sorrows she wept the purest tears of sympathy—for whose alienation from her child, her country, and herself, she keenly mourned—and whose premature death gave a fell blow to her already tottering health,

and to her agonised heart an endless source of grief.

Too well Angelina guessed the motive which actuated the will of the amiable lord Frederic Stanhope; and her feeling heart was wrung with anguish. To make up to the little Clementina that maternal protection and advantage she had been, though innocently, the cause of depriving her of, was now, alas! all that she had in her power to evince her affection by, to the memory of her beloved lamented Julia: and Viola herself was not an object of more tender solicitude than Clementina, whose lively and ardent disposition led her to return with fervor the tenderness of her aunt, and the affection of her cousin—between whom and herself a most pure and lasting friendship cemented, which grew with their growth and strengthened with their strength.

CHAP. XVII.

So attached was the good archbishop to these children of misfortune, that to see them happy was his earnest wish, and to indulge them in every thing within his power to bestow his chief delight: scarcely a day passed without his taking either his lovely niece or his playful ward into the city, or to his palazzo, to load each of these fascinating children with every present affluence and affection could suggest to please them, and through their happiness to steal a pang from the sorrows of Angelina.

It was in one of these excursions, and just at the period Viola had entered her fifteenth year, as she and her reverend uncle were driving from St. Rosolia's to his palazzo in Palermo, one of the numerous processions which so frequently throng the streets in catholic countries impeded the progress of their carriage in a narrow street;

and whilst the pious prelate was engaged at the window next to him, bestowing his loudly called for benediction upon the devout procession, Viola hastily turned her head from the pious multitude to look into a carriage which just then had drawn up by the side of her uncle's, and beheld in it a remarkably handsome and elegant-looking man, with his eyes earnestly riveted upon her face. The sensitive modesty of Viola ever made her shun the gaze of observation; but though transient was the glance her timidity gave her of this stranger, he made her not only blush but tremble too; and scarcely knowing what she felt, or why she was so unusually agitated, she caught, in her tremulous grasp, the hand of her astonished uncle, who, casting a contemptuous look at the still rudely gazing stranger, called to his attendants to proceed with expedition.

The archbishop's carriage was once more in motion, and they were proceeding rapidly to enter the court-yard of the palace, when they were arrested by a violent jar, and at the same moment heard a dreadful crash. Viola was terribly alarmed, although

soon informed that the accident was occasioned by a coach which, in striving to pass the archbishop's, when too nearly in contact with it, had been, by the mismanagement of the driver, overturned. The archbishop's coachman, without further impediment, drove up to the palace door; and the moment the good prelate alighted, he sent his people to afford all possible assistance to those who might have suffered in the overturn; and with orders, if any person was hurt, to bring them into the palace.

The perturbation and alarm of Viola prevented her uncle from leaving her and going himself, as he otherwise would have done, to offer assistance to those who might claim it; and she had just finished drinking a glass of water, which her uncle had made her take, when the stranger, whose gaze had so much disconcerted her uncle and agitated her, entered the apartment leaning upon two of the good prelate's domestics. Haughty was his mien, while resentment glowed on his cheeks, shot from his eyes, and sounded in his voice.

"The accident I have just received," said

he, " must plead my excuse for presuming to enter here; and as a child of misfortune I claim from the benevolent prelate of Montreal an asylum here until a carriage can arrive to convey me home."

" My lord," replied the archbishop, " you well know that apology is unnecessary; since you are not now to learn my doors and heart are never closed against the unfortunate or the penitent."

The stranger's eyes flashed fire as he sunk upon a couch to which the servants had supported him; while Viola, grieved and amazed at the ungracious coldness of her uncle's manner, stood irresolute—humanity urging her to offer assistance to him whom her uncle's unusual conduct seemed to proclaim unworthy of compassion. The archbishop, however, did not suffer her long to remain in this dilemma; for, taking her hand, he abruptly said—

" Come, my child, this is no place for thee—come then, and let us leave this gentleman to the care of the domestics."

The archbishop had taken the hand of Viola to lead her out; but she moved not

one step. Shocked, grieved, and ashamed, at such cruel conduct, she gently articulated in a voice of soft reproach—

"Will the archbishop of Montreal leave a wounded stranger, who has flown to him for succour?"

The moment Viola's voice reached the stranger's ear, the scorn and rage depicted upon his fine countenance gave way to expressions of a very different nature: admiration and grateful sensibility played round his mouth and darted from his eyes, whilst the interestingly lovely Viola stood looking touchingly up at her uncle, imploring that pity with her melting eyes for this stranger which, until now, he seemed to give with prodigal hand to all who claimed it.

The good prelate, visibly affected, looked from Viola to the stranger, then from him to Viola; and at length benignly said—"I will only go to bring him proper aid; but stay you here, my child—your soothing pity may beguile his pain till my return." Then motioning for the domestics to depart with him, the door was closed upon Viola and the stranger.

For a moment Viola forcibly felt the awkwardness of her situation; but her native dignity, and a wish to be serviceable, soon banishing all embarrassment, she gracefully (although with a tremulous hand) presented him with some wine, which the archbishop had in vain poured out for her.

"Let me recommend this specific to you, signior," said she gently; "it was the archbishop's prescription to me. I was only frightened; but, as I fear you are severely hurt, you much more require it."

The stranger took the glass with a hand infinitely more tremulous than her own; then gallantly thanking her, and wishing her health and felicity, drank off the wine; whilst his fine and speaking eyes still remained riveted upon her: then in the most insinuating voice Viola had ever heard, he expressed his "regret at her having experienced so serious an alarm; at the same time he rejoiced in being the material sufferer, since she had escaped any real injury from an accident that threatened each carriage with equal danger;" and concluded by speaking "of the joy her friends in Pa-

lermo would experience upon learning her escape."

"I have no friend in Palermo, signior," replied Viola with a painful sigh, "but the archbishop of Montreal."

The stranger looked anxiously at her, while he eagerly said—"I wish not to hurt your feelings, believe me, lovely signora, or appear impertinently inquisitive; but your manner leads me to fear you have no parents."

"Oh yes; thank Heaven, I have a mother!"

The stranger turned pale; his lips quivered, whilst with painful agitation he articulated—

"Your father then is no more?"

"My father lives, signior, but—he is the marchese of Palermo; and—" Viola, shocked at what she had so far inadvertently said, suddenly ceased, and spread her beautiful hands over her face to hide her emotion, while the trickling tears strayed through her taper fingers on her snowy bosom.

"And," exclaimed the stranger in a tone of agitation alarming to Viola, "and you

execrate, disclaim the villain who has so shamefully thrown off his child?"

"My father is no villain!" said Viola, rising from her seat with all the dignity of offended majesty; and, casting a look of ineffable disdain upon the stranger, moved indignantly towards the door.

"Stay! but one moment stay, I conjure you!" exclaimed the now almost convulsed stranger with a look of supplication Viola found it impossible to withstand; "stay, and tell me truly—Do you not curse your unnatural father? Has not your injured mother taught you to invoke the bitterest maledictions upon his unworthy head?"

Viola shuddered; but, eager to exculpate her adored mother from such a horrible imputation, firmly said—"You know not my mother, else that insult had been spared me. In my mother is comprised every Christian virtue; and, from my earliest days till now, it has been her care to teach me, and in the most impressive manner, the duty and reverence which I owe my father: and should the marchese of Palermo ever allow me the happiness to evince it, he will know how

able has been the instructor, how willing the pupil; and you, signior, will be convinced how cruel, how unjust, was that suspicion which led you to suppose a pious mother ever taught her child to curse its father." Then, with the blush of resentment mantling on her cheeks, and the tears of wounded sensibility streaming from her eyes, she was about to quit the room, when the agitated stranger suddenly exclaimed—

"My child! my child! evince it now, and take me to your heart; as henceforth I take my long-neglected child to mine." And he clasped the astonished, agitated Viola with ardour to his breast.

For one moment the remembrance of her mother's injuries taught her to recoil from her father's first embrace: but instantly the recollection of that mother's precepts conquered the impulse; she returned with fervour his embrace, then sunk at his feet, and softly articulated—

"My father, bless your child."

The marchese sunk on his knees beside her. "Join your prayers to Heaven with

mine, my Viola, to pardon my injustice, my cruelty to you."

At this moment the good and venerable prelate entered the room, unobserved by father and child. Pleased, but not surprised, at the scene before him, he advanced with a glad and pious heart, and on his knees poured forth his solemn benediction upon them both.

The marchese of Palermo had been only a few days returned from the carnival of Venice to his native city, when the beforementioned procession stopped the progress of his carriage; and well knowing his uncle's equipage, as his drew up alongside of the archbishop's carriage, he eagerly bent forward to throw some of his resentful looks at his estimable relation, who had for years refused all intercourse with him, when the beautiful, interesting Viola caught and arrested his most earnest attention.

His agitated heart instantly prompted a wish that this lovely creature might be his child; while, from her exquisite beauty, his long unconquerable love for Julia led him

to fear that this must be her daughter, whom he well knew to be under the guardianship of the archbishop of Montreal. But soon the sudden blush, quickly averted eye, and the agitated grasp of the archbishop's hand, led him to suppose his wish realised; but that his child knew him, and had turned from him in resentment and disgust. His busy conscience told him he well deserved such conduct; while mortified pride, with the torturing sting of self-reproach, awakened a violent glow of anger against the innocent cause of all this unusual agitation. The archbishop's command to his people to hasten home, which of course the marchese heard, increased his indignation; and scarcely knowing what he intended, he madly ordered his coachman to turn (for he had been going a contrary way to his uncle), and to draw up again by the side of the archbishop's carriage. The delay the turning necessarily occasioned prevented the marchese's coach from overtaking the archbishop's until arrived at the palace-gate, when the accident occurred which our reader is already acquainted with.

The marchese was but slightly hurt, but mortification and chagrin made him feel disordered; and believing himself materially injured by the concussion, and wishing for an opportunity of learning who the lovely companion of his uncle really was, he suffered himself to be led into the archbishop's presence, where the conduct of the fascinating Viola soon convinced him that he was perfectly unknown to her. Her blush and averted face he now rightly attributed to youthful timidity; and, more anxious than ever to learn if she was indeed his child, or only Julia's, he resolved not to leave the house until he gained that information his hopes and fears so eagerly panted for. The penetrating prelate, well versed in all the turnings of the human mind, saw in the agitation his nephew betrayed something that whispered hopes of reconciliation; and calling the domestics away, he quitted the room, resolving not to interfere, but to leave all to nature and the fascination of his beloved Viola.

The marchese, happy almost beyond concealment at this unexpected event, eagerly

and artfully turned his conversation to the subject of her parents, to learn who was so blessed with such a child; and if, as he each moment more fervently wished, she was his own, to learn if possible the opinion she had been led to form of him. All turned out most flattering to his hopes, and far beyond the expectations that conscience formed. He had no intention, when their *tête-à-téte* commenced, to avow himself as her parent, should she prove to be his child: but the bewitching power of nature conquered—the pure and filial virtue of Viola awakened every dormant worthy feeling. Nature gave the signal, and the father reclaimed the libertine.

CHAP. XVIII.

The marchese of Palermo, by the archbishop's desire, remained at his palace until the bruises he had sustained in his overturn were perfectly recovered; and, at the marchese's earnest request, Viola continued there also, as his companion and his nurse. Her not returning to St. Rosolia's was occasioned by such an unexpected fortunate event, that it perfectly reconciled her delighted mother to being for a time bereft of the sweet society of her adored child; whilst the now little less adoring father found each day, each hour, new causes for admiration, for exultation, in the expanding perfections of his lovely child, whom he now could scarcely bear one moment from his sight—angry at every cause that occasioned her absence, suspicious of every delay, jealous of her affection for her mother and uncle, and trembling lest, when the time arrived that he could no longer rea-

sonably prevent her visiting her mother, she should return to him no more.

At length every inconvenience the marchese had experienced from his accident was past, and he anxiously wished to strike the wondering world with admiration and delight at the perfections of his child; and he courteously asked the archbishop's leave for Viola to accompany him to his own palazzo, there to remain some time with him—yet firmly resolved, should uncle or mother object, to claim his right as a father, and take her by force of authority. The archbishop was too politic, and the tender marchesa too happy at the auspicious prospects of her child, to think of a refusal; and Viola accompanied her father to his palazzo, without the earnest wish of her heart being gratified by visiting her mother.

Our reader has been already told the marchese of Palermo was vain, and passionately fond of notoriety. Viola was his own; and next to being admired and talked of himself, to have his child the object of public applause and conversation was most

congenial to his wishes. Viola then, attired with all the elegance and splendor of taste and affluence, was presented to the great world at Palermo by her exulting father.

Here for the first time his wishes and projects were not disappointed. Lady Viola de Avellino was the rage, the phrensy of the moment: crowds followed her, to gaze at and admire; suitors poured in from every side: her dress, her walk, her air, her manner, even the tone of her voice and the expression of her countenance, were the aim of imitation for every fashionable belle; and the society of the marchese of Palermo was now as eagerly sought by the estimable and exalted as it had for fifteen preceding years been shunned.

Among the numerous visitors who entered the lists for Viola's favour was the prince of Romando, a man young, handsome, amiable, sensible, and accomplished, with rank and affluence to gratify the father's ambition, with every requisite to captivate a girl of fifteen just emerged from a convent. But fervently as the mar-

chese wished for this alliance to take place, his own ill-fated marriage determined him never to force the inclination of his child, not to urge her to marry where he was not assured her affections were irrevocably placed, nor allow her to bestow her hand where there was not positive proof of her being firmly beloved again. Yet still wishing for this union, he considered it no infringement of his resolution to throw the prince and Viola in each other's way as frequently as possible, without apparent design, and to forward and promote the attachment by every means consistent with delicacy and his daughter's future happiness.

A splendid ball was given by the prince of Romando's mother; and to it Viola went, adorned with a number of valuable gems, and every elegance the fortune of her father could procure. Her youthful fancy was dazzled by the brilliancy of her dress, and, elated by expected homage, she appeared with a degree of animated loveliness even surpassing her former attractions. Beautiful and gay, the admiration of every beholder,

the partner of the prince, the idol of his adoration, Viola emerged from the gentle, sweetly plaintive character circumstances had formed for her, and here appeared the life, the soul, the spirit of the circle—until, as she stood at the entrance of a *pergola*, listening with playful archness to the impassioned homage of the prince, the delighted father gazing on her in all the exultation of realising hope—when on a sudden her mirthful look changed to an expression of horror mingled with anguish; the animated vermilion of her cheeks assumed the ashy hue of death; tears gushed from her eyes; her head sunk in disorder against the arbour; her father caught her in his arms. "Oh take me hence!" she cried. All was consternation, astonishment, vague conjecture. She pleaded sudden illness; and the marchese conveyed her home.

Alarmed almost to torture, her agonised father summoned his own physician, who finding no alarming symptom about lady Viola, whom he pronounced agitated and overcome by heat and fatigue, desired her

to retire immediately to bed, and prescribed a soporific for her. Notwithstanding dottore Balsamico's assurance to the contrary, the marchese wound himself into a belief that Viola was in imminent danger. He laid an embargo upon dottore Balsamico, and roused every domestic in the palazzo to be in readiness to summon other medical assistance, should any change for the worse take place. Every horse was saddled, every carriage ready; while he himself paced from one room to another, up stairs and down, in all the phrensy of ungoverned sorrow, fully believing the moment of retribution was at hand, and that his child was about to be snatched from him, as a punishment for his cruelty to her mother and to her.

At length Zingaresca, Viola's own woman, appeared, to inform the marchese that lady Viola, after weeping a great deal, had, from the power of the medicine she had taken, fallen into a profound and tranquil sleep.

"The sleep of death!" fear instantly whispered to the anticipating terrors of the

agonized father; and he as instantly darted by Zingaresca, and, followed by dottore Balsamico, flew to the chamber of his child. Softly, but precipitately, he hastened to her bed, and, drawing the curtains aside, beheld her in a profound though not a tranquil slumber. Her closed eyelids were moistened by tears, and from the long fringe of each trembled the humid distillations of sorrow, whilst on the only cheek her position exhibited a pearly drop rested: her head lay reclined upon one hand, which held grasped within it a miniature picture, which seemed to have been pressed close to her lips when she fell into her sleep.

"Tortures and madness!"—Here was an annihilating discovery for an impetuous father.—"Here was the portrait of some clandestine lover, the solution of the evening's enigma! Ambition and vanity had led her on to listen for a moment to the prince, when a sudden recollection of this vile and low-born wretch (for vile and low-born the marchese decidedly pronounced him) had startled, disordered, and agitated her."—Ten thousand furies! From the seclusion

and humble sphere his child had been reared in, she had imbibed plebeian notions. The brother of a lay-sister, the nephew of a portress, the cousin of a grave-digger, all passed in terrible array before his phrensied imagination. He consigned the whole convent of St. Rosolia to the d——l; execrated his own conduct as the cause of all: and these thoughts, as they passed rapidly through his mind, wound him into such a paroxysm of rage, that, forgetting every fear of awaking the sleeping invalid, he resolved to know the extent of this disgrace so providentially discovered to him, and hastily snatched the portrait from his daughter's grasp, and beheld, most strikingly pourtrayed, the beautiful, interesting, plaintive countenance of her mother!—The conviction he expected could scarcely have disconcerted him more completely. The picture fell from his trembling hand; and as precipitately as he had entered he now quitted Viola's chamber, and retired to his own, from whence he emerged no more that night.

The power of the medicine Viola had

taken was dispelled by the rough manner in which she had been awakened: she slept no more that night, for her thoughts had painful subjects, and she wept uncontrolled till morning; when she arose, and on her knees again entreated pardon of Heaven for her culpable folly, and inexcusable ingratitude to the best of mothers.

The cause of this suddenly founded accusation we must now take the liberty of recounting to our reader, as a solution of Viola's mysterious agitation at the princess of Romando's ball. As she stood by the pergola, listening with all the pleasure of youthful vanity to the prince's adulation, which touched not her heart, but often from its superlative flights nearly exciting her risibility, the conversation of two elderly ladies, who had entered the arbour from another room, reached her ears and arrested her attention; it was the continuation of a discourse relative to herself.

"I certainly agree with you in thinking," said one, "that lady Viola di Avellino is even more beautiful than was her beautiful mother."

" But mark me," replied the other, " it is only in personal perfection that I admit the superiority. Lady Viola is, I fear, vain and frivolous—insensible, at least, if not ungrateful. Decked out in all the gems I well remember her unfortunate mother to have worn in the short days of her happiness, she seems to forget, in the regions of mirth and prosperity, the sorrows and injuries of that incomparable mother."

Viola was neither insensible nor ungrateful: these words struck dreadfully upon her heart. Every accusing feeling flew to the court of justice within her own breast. She condemned herself without offering a single palliation; and the sentence of her mental judge was the misery of self-reproach.

At breakfast the father and daughter met, with heavy eyes and dejected countenance; but no explanation ensued, nor did the evidently depressed marchese start any subject that could lead Viola to offer that request she feared yet panted to make, for permission to visit and ask forgiveness of her adored mother. That day the prince of Romando made his proposals

to the marchese of Palermo for lady Viola; who being left by her father totally to her own decision, rejected (almost with horror) the man who had caused her, even for a moment, to forget her mother's sorrows.

From this period Viola secluded herself as much as possible from every scene of gaiety. Her short flight of vivacity was past; her appetite fled; her rest was broken; and her bloom faded like a blighted flower. At length, anxiety for his child's health led the agitated father to that subject he had anticipated in idea, and dreaded to enter upon. One morning, as they were sitting together after breakfast, the marchese, with all the winning gentleness of affection, entreated the confidence of his child, and desired to learn the cause of her but too apparent unhappiness.

"I have no cause for unhappiness, my father," replied Viola, bursting into tears, "but in being separated from my mother; and from my self-reproaches for suffering the delusions of pleasure to teach me, even for a moment, to forget her."

A painful pause ensued. At length the

marchese mournfully said—"You are weary, then, Viola, of the affection of a doting father, and wish to leave him?"

"No, Heaven forbid!" returned Viola fervently. "My wish, my lord, is to reside alternately here and at St. Rosolia's; to share alike the affection of both my honoured parents; and to divide mine and my tenderest attentions equally between them."

The marchese arose, and traversed the room in much disorder; at length he returned to his seat, and almost, from agitation, inarticulately said:—"I am grieved to say, my child, your amiable wish can never be realised. The unhappy disagreement so long subsisting between your mother and me, which my Viola will spare me the pain and humiliation of entering upon, must, alas! affect our child. Situated as the marchesa and I are, you cannot divide your affection between us. Mutual jealousy in an alternate residence would but increase our misery and division. To one parent only can you devote yourself. You must be alone your mother's; or, oh, rapture! wholly mine."

Viola, uttering a faint shriek, fell at his feet, and grasped his knees in all the convulsed agitation of horror and despair.

"Oh, my father! revoke, revoke that dreadful sentence. Oh! in pity to us both, drive not your affectionate child for ever from you."

The marchese flung her from him in agonised phrensy. "So then you have decided!—You throw me off! I—I am to be the victim of your choice! It is well—very well. But remember, girl," and he fixed his eyes sternly upon her, "though affection turns you not to me, interest should sway you. Remember, infatuated girl, that I have the power to disinherit you—to leave you a titled beggar—to leave the young marchesa of Palermo a poor dependent upon the charity of an unfeeling world! Recollect this, Viola, ere you rashly fly from the protection of your despised, your hated father."

"For the love of the Holy Virgin," exclaimed Viola almost frantically, "rend not thus the heart of your affectionate child. I love you so well—indeed I do, my father,

and am so very grateful for your kindness and tenderness to me, that Heaven knows I would not voluntarily leave you. But my poor mother has long been deprived of health, is often very sick, and always very miserable:—her kindness, and my debt of gratitude, commenced from the hour of my birth. She nurtured, she loved, she cherished me; she taught me every good I know; while Heaven and her Viola were for fifteen years the only consolation her sorrows knew;—and can I now forsake her?"

"You might have spared these reproaches, Viola," said the marchese with terrifying calmness; "they ill befit you to speak, nor will I hear more of them. This conversation can never be renewed. This instant decides your fate. Your choice is free, lady Viola: remain with a fond, a doting father, and enjoy all that affluence, that indulgence can bestow; or return to your mother, and to irrevocable poverty and obscurity."

"Then to my mother, and to that poverty and obscurity which the self-conviction of ingratitude shall not embitter, will I return.

Viola di Avellino will never dishonour the illustrious name she bears; but ever must she deplore her cruel destiny, that awakened in her heart the most pure and glowing affection for a parent who thus throws her off for ever." Viola, with a look of agonised supplication, sufficient to melt the most obdurate heart, pressed her father's hand to her lips, as she tremulously arose. He flew from her touch to the bell, which he vehemently rung. A servant appeared. The marchese ordered a carriage to be got ready immediately, and that father Leopold, his domestic chaplain, should attend him on the instant in the library; and dashing Viola from him with a menacing look, who was again on her knees clinging to his coat, imploring a blessing ere they parted, he with all the phrensied gestures of a maniac rushed from the room.

In about half an hour father Leopold appeared to the weeping Viola, to inform her she must instantly accompany him. Viola stood too much in awe of her father to attempt any further supplication; but silent, and full of grief, she attended her father's

chaplain to the convent of St. Rosolia, to the good abbadessa of which he delivered lady Viola, who, he said, would herself account to the marchesa of Palermo for her unexpected return.

CHAP. XIX.

The joy Viola would have experienced in once more embracing her fond and beloved mother was most dreadfully allayed by the agonising reflexion of the lamentable event which restored her so unexpectedly to her mother's arms; and how to disclose all the heart-rending circumstances of her second banishment from the house and affection of her father was a task poor Viola found herself at this moment perfectly unequal to. She well knew that to see her in the favour and affection of her father had been for years the first wish of the amiable marchesa's heart; and after that wish had been so unexpectedly and flatteringly realised, the bitter disappointment, Viola feared, would be more than the fragile frame of her mother could endure. From inflicting such a fell blow to the peace of her beloved parent she recoiled, and therefore resolved to make

no disagreeable communications until she had seen and consulted her uncle. But this concealment, with the secret anguish her heart had long endured, with this day's dreadful increase of it, now proved too much for Viola. Her head ached violently; her eyes were heavy; her pulse beat quick; and her attentive mother found her very feverish; from which, and the evasive answers Viola made when questioned upon the reason of her unexpected return, the marchesa's anticipating fears whispered that something of new misfortune had occurred: and in her anxiety to learn what, she sent a hasty summons to the archbishop of Montreal; who came to her fully equal to informing her upon the distressing subject, having, just before her summons reached him, received a letter from his nephew relative to the transactions of that morning.

The exultation and gratified affection of the marchesa upon the conduct of her amiable, grateful child, only increased her affliction and disappointment at that child's being so unjustly and cruelly deprived of her brilliant expectations by a conduct so

meritorious. It deserved applause and recompense, not the punishment it met with; and feeling that it was for her Viola had given up every smile of fortune, her grief, gratitude, and affection were wound up to the most painful and highest pitch, and added the most dreadful poignancy to every fear the too evident indisposition of her child inspired.

The amiable archbishop remained the whole day at St. Rosolia's, to give every consolation in his power to his beloved Angelina; and as the day advanced, the increasing indisposition of Viola prevented her being able longer to deny her illness, which for her mother's peace she had for some hours done; and now also, for that mother's peace, she consented to receive medicinal aid.

The evening was fast closing in, when a little group, drawn by affection thither, were collected round Viola's couch, on which she reclined, her head resting upon that balmy pillow where the affectionate child finds ease for every ill—the bosom of her fond attentive mother; the good prelate and amiable prioress seated by her, ready to

give every comfort in their power, or to beguile sickness and sorrow of their pangs by their instructive or amusing conversation: while close to the couch Clementina sat, one hand of Viola's fast clasped in hers, and which often felt a trickling tear that fell, because she had not power to make her cousin well or her aunt happy. This friendly little group were thus situated, when the solemn stillness that then reigned in the convent was unusually interrupted by a loud and violent ringing at the gate; and in a few moments after the following letter was, by a conversa, delivered into the hand of the agitated and alarmed Viola.

"MY CHILD,

"Erase from your remembrance the transactions of this morning;—but in mine they shall hold a place for ever. If it is possible, look on me again with the same affection you bore me yesterday. Viola, I implore you to return to me instantly with father Leopold, whom I have sent for you. I am very ill, Viola, and want your care. The amiable mother, who has made you

what you are, will not refuse to let you come to and comfort a miserable man.

" My Viola's henceforth
" affectionate father,
" PALERMO."

The agitated marchesa beheld with alarm the variations of her child's countenance as she perused the billet; and with equal agitation she herself read it when Viola presented it to her. Without speaking, she gave it to the archbishop; then looked anxiously at her child, inquiringly at him.

" Viola must go," said the archbishop.

" Ill as she is?" replied the anxious mother.

" Diseases generally cease when the cause is removed," returned the archbishop: " uneasiness of mind solely occasioned Viola's indisposition; and "——

" And now I am well, almost quite well," said Viola. " The cause of my mother's recent sorrow is now providentially removed, and my anticipating heart predicts a thousand happy things for us all."

"Heaven grant them, my daughter!" said the good abbadessa. "But you shall not leave us without the attendance of sister Constantia: she is a careful nurse, is firmly attached to you, and you love her. Her being with you will be a consolation to our dear marchesa; and should you not want her care, she can assist you in nursing your father."

This kind and considerate offer was gratefully accepted; and while the good Constantia (one of the hospital sisters) was preparing to attend Viola, the agitated marchesa took her daughter by the hand, and, accompanied by the archbishop, the prioress, and Clementina, proceeded to the parlour, where father Leopold was waiting, and herself delivered Viola to his care.

"My child is far from well, reverend father," said she: "my lord will therefore, I trust, excuse the liberty my anxiety has prompted me to take, in sending one of our convent nurses to attend her."

Father Leopold had never before beheld the unfortunate Angelina; and, whether awed or affected by her appearance, he was

unable to reply to her. But intimating that the marchese would feel impatient at delay, Viola embraced her mother and cousin, received the parting benediction of the prelate and abbadessa, and, accompanied by sister Constantia, attended father Leopold to the carriage, which quickly conveyed her to her father; who received her with redoubled affection from her late alienation.

The attendance of the nurse being mentioned, and explained to the marchese, every idea of his own indisposition vanished in care and anxiety for his daughter. Viola assured that her time should be equally shared by both her parents, and all mental ill being removed, sister Constantia returned in a few days to St. Rosolia's with the happy intelligence of Viola's perfect recovery.

Lady Viola had been about a month on her second visit to her father, during which period she had made several morning visits to her mother and her uncle; when one day, after the marchese had been absent from home for some hours, father Leopold rushed into the apartment where she was, and with looks aghast suddenly exclaimed—

" Your unfortunate father has been drawn into the commission of a dreadful crime, amenable to the law not only of Sicily, but wherever the power of Italy can reach him. His property all is forfeited, and his person will be instantly seized, unless he flies. He sends me to you, to implore you to join his wanderings, although an exile and a beggar."

The shock of this intelligence was too powerful for Viola to sustain; she fell senseless to the ground. On her recovery she found herself in the arms of her father, who appeared in the utmost grief and consternation.

" Forgive me, my child," he cried.

" Oh! why do we delay?" she eagerly exclaimed. " Let us instantly fly—I am ready to accompany you, my father."

" What!" said the marchese in breathless agitation, " will Viola go with a beggared criminal, and leave that mother for whom she unhesitatingly gave up every smile of fortune?"

Viola clung round the marchese's neck.—" For the love of Heaven!" she cried,

" name not my mother until we are far from Palermo. You are now the most unfortunate of my parents; and your claims upon my affection, my duty, my attentions, are therefore now the strongest. Let us fly, my father, and I will be all the comfort to you that I can."

Her father pressed her with exulting tenderness to his breast. " My child, forgive the cruel stratagem that has put your filial virtue and affection to so severe a trial. I have committed no offence against the laws of my country. I am not bereft of my fortune, or compelled to fly; but, keenly feeling my long series of unkindness to you, and my late cruel caprice, I thought it impossible that you could experience any affection for me; and that duty and obedience which you evinced by so readily returning to me, even when you were ill, I feared was the effect of your mother's and uncle's policy. Father Leopold, participating in my doubts and fears, formed that plot which gave such anguish to your feeling heart. As a proscribed criminal I had nothing to bestow upon my child but po-

verty and sorrow. The dreadful ordeal unveiled her heart, and proved its sterling virtue. I now glory and exult in my child; and could I, by any means within my power, silence the reproaches of my conscience for my cruelties to that exalted incomparable being who has made my Viola what she is, I think my future life should be such that could not make my child unhappy; should be such that even the fastidious archbishop of Montreal should not disapprove."

Viola threw her arms around her father's neck, and, while she imprinted a kiss of sensibility and affection upon his cheek, timidly whispered the first wish of her heart, as the means most likely to silence the reproaches of his mental guide. From that hour Viola was empowered to take every proper method to effect a reconciliation between her long-estranged parents. Her task was not very difficult, since the marchesa was too amiable, too susceptible of every Christian virtue, for one moment to shelter resentment against the contrite. She found her husband a sincere penitent; and though great were the afflictions he

had made her suffer, she graciously forgave him, and, at his desire, returned to fill that place in the world he had so long banished her from. The good archbishop was once more on friendly terms with his no longer despicable nephew; and the now happy and sanguine Viola thought of nothing but permanent felicity in the re-union of her parents. But, alas! Viola was not born to experience felicity unalloyed.

Angelina now, in her thirty-second year, a phantom only of her former self, which each rude blast seemed ready to dissolve, returned to her husband at the call of duty, without one idea of expecting to find in her re-union any of that happiness she had once hoped for and been disappointed in. She found the marchese a most tender, attentive, and, to all appearance, affectionate husband. But Angelina was no longer to be deceived by appearances. She had been tenderly and firmly attached to the marchese of Palermo, and his cruelties to her and to her child had not been able to shake that attachment. She still loved him, and clearly saw she had no power over his heart

but what his newly awakened duty and sorrow for the misery he had heaped upon her gave her. Her feeling, delicate mind shrunk with horror from this conviction: she now considered herself as the bane of her husband's repose, the only alloy to the happiness of him so tenderly beloved by her. Her presence, she feared, was a source of constant mental reproach to him; and that every kindness she experienced from him was an act of painful penance inflicted by his conscience.

This baneful idea, so unfortunately conceived, so fatally cherished, fast mined the feeble wreck of an already exhausted frame. For Viola's sake she strove against mental and bodily ill; put her fortitude to the utmost stretch; went into public with a placid air and assumed cheerfulness: but it was in vain—mental suffering had signed her death-warrant, and her rapid decline was soon too visible to every one.

The grief and distraction of the marchese (who now looked upon his Angelina as the most perfect of human beings) was little short of the affectionate Viola's. Every

medicinal aid, every domestic care, were eagerly bestowed upon her; but still she declined; and the distress of the father, and anguish of the daughter, knew no consolation. The marchese expected very shortly a summons to Rome, relative to a law-suit he had been for some time engaged in about some considerable property he held in the pope's dominions; and he now resolved to set out immediately with the marchesa upon a voyage to Lisbon, where he would leave her with some near relations of his own, while he should go and negotiate his business at Rome; that he would then return to Portugal, and, when the marchesa was sufficiently recovered (which he would not entertain a doubt of), he would take her a tour through the southern and most salubrious provinces of the continent.

Viola was in ecstasies at this arrangement, as her fond and flattering wishes realised from it that perfect recovery of her adored mother her agonised heart so anxiously panted for. A commodious vessel, with a skilful captain and crew, was now procured. Dottore Balsamico and sister

Constantia engaged to attend the marchesa during her expedition. But that which afforded the declining Angelina more pleasure than any other part of her husband's kind arrangements was, his asking Clementina to accompany them upon this tour; for to this poor girl the marchesa thought her husband's conduct hitherto frigid and unkind.

The marchese had certainly treated Clementina with a cold formality that had mortified the susceptible girl, and much hurt her aunt and Viola. But in some degree this conduct of the marchese's was actuated by the most laudable motives. He believed that it would be indelicate and unkind in him to Angelina to evince the smallest partiality towards the child of Julia; and while wishing to steer clear of every thing that could wound the feelings of his wife, he, like the generality of people who act by rule, went beyond the mark, and appeared to every one often rude, but always ungracious, to an amiable and lovely young creature, whose misfortunes he pitied, whose perfections he admired, and whom he had a

sincere regard for—as soon as a little pang of jealous apprehension had subsided, which he had entertained, lest her beauty should prove more attractive, and occasion more celebrity, than his Viola's. He acknowledged Clementina excessively lovely and fascinating; but he thought Viola infinitely more so; yet as he had formerly, contrary to the general opinion, given the palm of beauty to Julia from Angelina, he trembled lest his judgment might not now, no more than then, coincide with the fancy of the multitude. But in this matter his dreadful apprehensions were most decisively allayed. Clementina was admired by all who saw her: but she attracted no gazing crowd like Viola; she numbered not one quarter of the suitors in her train; she received not the homage, the adulation, that lady Viola di Avellino received;—not, gentle reader, that Clementina Stanhope was less lovely than her cousin, but she was not heiress to the titles and estates of the marchese of Palermo. Clementina was an almost portionless foreigner; and the beaux of Palermo,

like the beaux of other countries which we could name, found those charms the most attractive which were seen through the magnifying perspective of rank and fortune.

CHAP. XX.

At length, attended by the fervent benedictions of the amiable prelate of Montreal, this anxious party set out, with the grateful marchesa, upon this hope-inspiring voyage. Propitious gales wafted them, with the utmost expedition, to the shore of Lisbon; and as soon as the marchesa and her attendants, with Viola and Clementina, were comfortably settled at the house of the marchese's relations, he set out for Rome upon that business which peremptorily demanded his presence.

The delusive malady of Angelina in a very few weeks assumed the most flattering appearance. From her amiable host and hostess she received the most friendly, hospitable, and polite attention. The salubrious air of the place seemed to renovate her strength, and the absence of the marchese took from her spirits a considerable

load of sadness. She had not now, momentarily, to undergo the agonising pang each act of kindness, each trait of tenderness he evinced, inflicted, from the direful belief that all was inspired by contrition—all the painful and humiliating task of retribution.

The affectionate and ardent Viola, now inspired with the most fond and flattering hopes, and Clementina, equally elated at the auspicious prospect of her beloved aunt's recovery, no longer refused to appear in company, or enter into those amusements the marchesa could partake of. Fame soon blazoned forth the beauty, suavity, and elegance of manners of the lovely and interesting Sicilians. The state of Clementina's finances was here unknown; and it would be difficult to say which—she, her aunt (who now looked full as beautiful as she had ever done, and, from the nature of her malady, almost celestial), or Viola—was most admired, or which fascinated most completely. But we only find it necessary to inform our reader of one conquest made upon this expedition; as no other made by

the fair cousins, at this period, turned out of any importance to our narrative.

At this time was stationed at Lisbon an officer in the Spanish navy, who had lately signalised himself against the Dutch, in some of the most gallant actions ever fought by the Spaniards against a maritime foe; and for his almost unprecedented bravery, by which his country obtained a glorious and complete victory over the enemy, and gained several valuable and important conquests in the West-India settlements, he was created a grandee of Spain, knight of the golden fleece (an honour seldom bestowed but on princes), and raised to the rank of admiral in the Spanish navy.

This popular hero was then, as our female reader can readily suppose, the admiration of all the women in Spain and Portugal; for, in addition to ever-captivating valour, he was only in his twenty-fourth year, beautiful in face and figure, seductive in manners, fascinating in voice and conversation, the favourite of his sovereign, and the idol of the people. But, alas! his heart bore no proportion to the perfections

of his exterior; for in that was to be found the most singular compound of every vice and virtue as ever disgraced or ornamented the mind of man. With a strange versatility of character, he would at times be absolutely all that was great and good; or, by quick and unaccountable transition, turn to vice and be contemptible.

This modern Alcibiades, at this period elated by his success and fame, and anxious for increasing honours, had given himself wholly up to the guidance of his good genii; and in the semblance of every thing amiable and captivating, he was introduced by their host, Don Philip de Sintra, to the fair Sicilians. The fame of Viola's beauty, her rank and riches, had reached his ears, and determined him, even before he beheld her, to obtain the invaluable prize. Ambition led him into that society where love soon chained him. Through some inattention at the moment of introduction, he believed Clementina to be the heiress to the Palermo titles and wealth; and ere the mistake was corrected, in defiance of ambition, his heart made a decision in favour of Viola, whose

exquisite loveliness, uncommon talents, and sweetness of manners, afterwards inspired him with a firm and ardent attachment to her, which never was subdued. And our readers will not surely wonder that the artful and seducing Don Ambrosio Fadrique Enriquez Valdevieso de Montalvan, in the fascinating form he then wore, stole imperceptibly into the affections of Viola—young, susceptible, with a disengaged heart, residing, as she then did, with a family who idolised him, who ever were resounding his fame, his virtues, his exploits; and what girl, not yet sixteen, could withstand

——" a conqueror, and young,
" Bound in her chains, and sighing at her feet?"
ROWE.

The moment the watchful marchesa perceived the admiring eyes of Don Ambrosio riveted upon Viola, she trembled for the heart of her child, and immediately wrote to her husband, to inform him of those anxious fears the fascinating appearance, character, and manners of Don Ambrosio had awakened in her maternal bosom. Ange-

lina could not interdict the visits of Don Ambrosio to a house not her own; nor could she prevent his frequent interviews with her daughter, as he was now scarcely ever out of the house which she inhabited; and it was with infinite pain the marchesa saw the affections of her child gone, before she could receive any reply from Rome. The artless Viola kept not a single thought of her heart secret from her adored mother; and that guileless heart was Ambrosio's before she was aware of her partiality.

Several days were most anxiously and uneasily passed by Angelina, after the time in which she could reasonably expect to hear from the marchese had elapsed without her receiving any letter; and as each day went by without bringing any intelligence or instructions to her, her fears and perplexities dreadfully augmented. At length a mandate arrived by her unthought of,—to the peace of Ambrosio a dreadful unexpected blow,—in an order from the marine minister to Don Ambrosio to sail instantly to Gibraltar.

In the most pitiable agony of mind at a

blow that threatened destruction to all his hopes of happiness, he flew to Viola, resolving to avail himself of that influence which her artlessness had discovered to his wary penetration he possessed over her affections, and strove, by every alluring wile in his power to adopt, to persuade her into a private marriage. But her upright and dutiful mind revolted from such a measure. She felt shocked and offended at the proposition; withstood the bewitching power of his seducing eloquence; and this attack upon her filial duty stole a suspicion into her ingenuous mind, of her lover's heart being not quite so amiable as she had hitherto conceived it; and from that moment the basis of her attachment felt a shock which weakened the before firm structure. In an agony of mental anguish scarcely to be conceived, Ambrosio quitted Lisbon almost immediately, more enamoured than ever; and admiring, with reverence almost idolatrous, that purity of rectitude which even his alluring arts had not power to overthrow.

The day after this dangerous man's de-

parture from Lisbon, the marchese of Palermo arrived, rejoiced at the apparent improvement in his interesting wife's health, and grieved at the unpropitious attachment of his child. He had just completed his business at Rome, when Angelina's letter of apprehensions, relative to Don Ambrosio, arrived; and in compliance with his resolution of never bestowing his child but on a man worthy of so much excellence, he instantly set out for Madrid, and, by an arduous and fatiguing scrutiny, traced out the origin of Don Ambrosio, his life prior to his late honourable successes, a true and unprejudiced statement of his real character, with several authentic and strongly-attested proofs of crimes committed from time to time by this lately ennobled eccentric man. The marchese next found means, by the interest of a powerful friend in the Spanish admiralty, to have the station of Don Ambrosio changed; and the moment after that official mandate was dispatched, he set out for Lisbon; where as soon as he arrived, he faithfully recounted to his Angelina all his proceedings subsequent to the

receipt of her important letter; and consulted with her upon the means of weaning the affections of their child from this unworthy object. Angelina, who well knew the disposition of her daughter, advised that plan which the marchese implicitly pursued.

Viola was terrified at the return of her father. She knew her mother would inform him of her attachment to Ambrosio: and she trembled at the idea of his anger, should he disapprove of an alliance with Don Ambrosio, who had, before he left Lisbon, commissioned Don Philip de Suntra to make his proposals for Viola to the marchese of Palermo, when and how he should think most likely to meet success.

Contrary to Viola's anticipating apprehensions, her father appeared more kind and affectionate to her, if possible, than ever; even after she knew Don Philip had executed his friend's request; and the morning after, summoning her into her mother's dressing-room, he, with much affectionate tenderness, informed her of the proposals Don Philip had made for his friend; of

her happiness being one of the dearest wishes of his heart; and that, as her mother had imparted to him the attachment's being mutual, he should not withhold his consent, provided his child should wish to become the wife of Don Ambrosio de Montalvan after she knew that extraordinary man's real character." The marchese then impressively, but dispassionately, informed her of every particular relative to Don Ambrosio, which he had with so much difficulty obtained.

The facts were too well attested both by written vouchers, and the word of persons of unimpeached honour and truth, for one moment to be doubted. Viola shuddered as she listened, and then sunk upon the bosom of her sympathising mother to hide her blushes and her tears. The painful and, in truth, horrid detail at length was finished, and the marchese of Palermo concluded with the tenderest assurances to his dreadfully agitated child, that to see her happy, in an union of reciprocal attachment, was, after her mother's perfect re-establishment in health, the first wish of his heart. "I will

never control the affections of my sweet child," said he; "I will only advise her as a tender, unalterable friend, and give her all that information relative to the object of her choice necessary for her to be acquainted with. For the present then, my love, we will drop this important subject. Take one week to consider seriously, my child; consult your heart well, and, at the expiration of that time, should you find—"

"My father!" said Viola firmly, "I will not take a day, an hour, a moment to consider. My heart has already decided. Your Viola will never unite herself to a man who stands convicted of the dreadful crimes of cruelty and ingratitude. Reject for me, my lord, the proposals of Don Ambrosio, whom I did love because I believed him possessed of every virtue under heaven. That delusion is dissolved, and I must now despise.—Yet will I confess to my indulgent parental friends, my heart is pained by this dreadful conviction. My imagination had formed a paragon of perfection, and I am shocked and grieved to find myself deceived. To Heaven and my father am I indebted

for my fortunate escape from misery, and my gratitude to both shall be eternal; and that week my father would have kindly given me to consult my heart, I now will take to restore it to tranquillity, and to erase from it every partial thought of this unworthy man."

Viola now tenderly embraced both her exulting and sympathising parents, and hastened from their caresses to go and give free indulgence to her agitated feelings.—A violent shower of tears relieved her throbbing, bursting heart; and a pious thanksgiving to Almighty Providence, for "its mercy to her," calmed the conflict in her mind. The pangs of grief and horror, at finding a beloved object unworthy of regard, gradually vanished before her detestation of his crimes. She gave him just praise for his virtues—wept that they were so basely alloyed; but at the expiration of that week she had taken to tranquillise her mind, every trace of attachment to Don Ambrosio de Montalvan was erased from her pure heart.

Her sympathising parents were charmed with the virtuous exertions of this darling child, whilst they grieved at the necessity of her making them; and both wished to remove her from a place where every one still sounded forth the praises of the young and beautiful hero, Don Ambrosio de Montalvan, whilst Don Philip de Sintra looked coldly on his guests for a rejection which he thought unjust and cruel. But Angelina's appearing to derive benefit from the air of Lisbon was a powerful chain that linked the marchese to the place. However, to remain now at Don Philip's his pride told him was impossible; and he consulted his friend and physician Dottore Balsamico upon the place best calculated for Angelina to remove to; when that friend shocked him to the very soul, by revealing a fatal truth which he thought it unpardonable longer to conceal from him.

The apparent amendment in the marchesa's health was only a deceitful gleam of sunshine, to render more dreadful the impending storm. Neither clime nor me-

dicine now could save her; nor had she strength to undergo the tour of the continent her anxious husband had projected for her. Dottore Balsamico advised, therefore, her removal to be a return to Sicily.

Dottore Balsamico's advice was followed. The marchesa and her sorrowful friends returned to Palermo, where, in a few weeks after, his dreadful prediction was fulfilled. The lovely, amiable, unfortunate Angelina yielded her last breath upon the agonised bosom of her child, just after receiving the host, with all the beautiful fervor of sincere faith and piety; and bestowing, in the most touching Christian firmness and mortal tenderness, her dying benediction upon her husband, her Viola, her Clementina, and her ever sincere friend the archbishop of Montreal.

CHAP. XXI.

We will here draw a veil over the sacred grief of Viola: it was awakened by the tenderest feelings, and tempered by the resignation of Christianity.

The marchese was a real mourner: the bitters of remorse were blended with his cup of sorrow. Too late was he sensible of the merits of his wife; too late had the tenderest affections mingled with his thoughts of her, whom conscience now unceasingly told him he had hurried like a cruel frost to an untimely grave.

The archbishop had ever felt the most tender parental affection for Angelina: he venerated her virtue; and her misfortunes placed her in the most genial spot that pity found within his compassionate breast. His regret was poignant; but it was fast locked within the centre of his heart, while his venerable face wore the solemn calm of

pious resignation. The uncontrollable lamentations of the ardent Clementina for her adored aunt, her second mother, the good prelate feared would but increase the heart-rending sorrows of Viola; he therefore moved her to St. Rosolia's: while Viola, to beguile her father's poignant grief, repressed her own affliction in his presence, hushed his wailings by her tenderness and fortitude, and won him from his sadness by her smile of resignation; while from her pillow she stole many an hour to mourn and weep for her adored incomparable mother.

Time, that lenient balm to every mental wound, had scarcely begun to steal from the poignancy of Viola's sorrow, when another dreadful blow fell on her. The truly penitent and mourning marchese had lately been seduced, by the compassionating archbishop, from home and unavailing lamentation, to his palace in Palermo, to dine sometimes with a party of entertaining and estimable men. It was now the winter-season; and one unfortunate evening, as the marchese was about to return from one of these

parties at his uncle's, he found that neither his carriage nor servants were yet arrived, although he had ordered them to attend at an earlier hour than it then was. A man, who appeared to be a domestic belonging to some one of the archbishop's guests, and who was standing in the hall when the marchese entered it, respectfully informed him, that he had seen his lordship's equipage, about a quarter of an hour before, drive most furiously up to dottore Balsamico's door.

One dreadful idea now took possession of the marchese's mind—his child was ill: and ignominious as it was deemed to be to walk in the streets of Palermo, the agitated marchese disregarded the entreaties of his uncle's old domestics to wait for a carriage to be got ready; and in an agony of mind which baffles all description, he rushed towards home, followed closely by his respectful informer, and at a greater distance by two of the archbishop's footmen, whose age would not allow them to keep pace with the anxious, agonised, impetuous fa-

ther, who, just as he turned into the Ottangolo Marino, where his palazzo stood, was furiously attacked by four bravos. The distraction of the marchese's mind had thrown him off his guard; and he found himself wounded before his thoughts were sufficiently abstracted from his child to remind him of defending himself. The marchese by no means was deficient in courage or strength; but numbers were overpowering him, when a stranger came up to his assistance, who by his valour and self-command wounded and dispersed the assassins, and, aided by the archbishop's domestics, who by this time arrived, conducted the marchese to the Palermo palazzo,—and where, anxious to know the fate of a man who had been so unfairly attacked, the gallant stranger begged leave to wait until the surgeons who were summoned should arrive and declare their opinions.

The grateful marchese, thankful for this new proof of the stranger's humanity, entreated him to attend him to his chamber, whither he ordered himself to be conveyed the moment his agonising apprehensions

relative to his child had been subdued by father Leopold's solemn assurances of her perfect health.

Viola, who was weeping in that chamber where her adored mother had breathed her last, and where she spent every hour she could steal from observation, alarmed by the unusual commotion that reigned in the adjacent rooms after her father's return, was led to inquire the cause, and soon learned the fatal truth, with an account of the gallant stranger's valour and humanity.

Almost frantic with grief, dismay, and apprehension, Viola flew to the chamber of her father, and there saw her sole surviving parent stretched on a couch, pale, faint, and bleeding from his wounds; and in the assiduous stranger beheld Don Ambrosio de Montalvan. The most dreadful idea instantly took possession of her mind; she believed the assassination of her father had been the plot of Ambrosio for some sinister purpose. A deadly sickness stole over her faculties, and she fell senseless on the floor. Upon her recovery she found herself in her own chamber, whither she had, in her mo-

ments of insensibility, been conveyed. Again she hastened to her beloved father. The surgeons had dressed his wounds; and oh, rapture to Viola! had pronounced them not mortal. Don Ambrosio was gone to another apartment: it had been discovered that he had been wounded in defence of the marchese, who entreated him to take a chamber in his palazzo, and whither the surgeons now attended to dress his wound, which was not deep or dangerous.

The affectionate Viola, stationed by her fond father's pillow, became in the course of the night almost distracted with terror: his moans and uneasy slumbers conveyed the most agonising apprehensions to her susceptible heart, which too soon were realised. She had the surgeons summoned ere the dawn of day; when, upon examination of the wounds, the one which had been considered of the least importance now created the most serious alarm. From its dreadful appearance they now feared it had been inflicted by a poisoned stiletto. Those fears were quickly verified. Its baneful influence soon spread to every vital part; and,

in defiance of all the aid that Sicily could give, the marchese of Palermo was in a few days numbered with the dead, leaving his almost distracted Viola, his orphan and ill-fated child, sole heiress to all his immense possessions, and to the guardianship of his estimable uncle.

Every inquiry was now set on foot to trace out the murderers of the marchese, but to no effect. A man, in the princess of Camarino's livery, had come to the marchese's palazzo that fatal evening, as with orders from the marchese for his equipage to go for him to the princess's *conversazioni*, which was the cause of the carriage not being at the archbishop's: but no intelligence could be obtained relative to this man, or of the obliging informer at the archbishop's; and no clue could by any means be discovered which could lead even to a suspicion of the perpetrators of this sanguinary deed, except in the mind of Viola; and, by some intuitive impulse, her eye of suspicion fixed upon the very man.

It was Don Ambrosio who deprived Viola of her father, whom he considered as the

only barrier to his happiness, and therefore resolved upon his death. In Sicily it was easy to gain accomplices, and to hire wretches to spill the blood of those who never injured them; and as a master-stroke of policy, he resolved to appear before his adored Viola in the amiable character of an heroic being who had risked his life in defence of a fellow-creature. But in this political scheme he over-reached himself: had the poisoned stiletto been omitted, had the marchese's life been spared, Viola might probaby have been his. The marchese, fond of life, might have been led by gratitude to espouse the cause of his supposed deliverer, and, from the natural caprice of his mind, to think lightly of his past offences; and the young Viola might have been persuaded into the alliance. As it was, he only gained a dreadful addition to his crimes, and the firm abhorrence of her he loved. Viola's was not a vindictive heart; and even had she proof against Ambrosio, vengeance could not restore her murdered parent. The suspicions, therefore, which

harrowed up her soul she communicated to no one, but left her revenge to Him who knows all hearts, and cannot err in judgment.

Upon the death of her father, the sorrowful Viola, now marchesa of Palermo, quitted the house which still contained her father's murderer, and with her uncle removed to the lonely castle of Palermo, situated upon the sea-shore, a few miles' distance from the city, where she could give free indulgence to her grief, and where she immediately summoned her beloved Clementina.

Clementina Stanhope was only one year younger than Viola, whom she so strongly resembled, that all who saw them had even from their infancy been struck by the wonderful similitude. Each form, each limb, each feature, seemed almost to have been cast in the same mould. Their hearts were equally amiable; but in expression of countenance, in air, in understanding, and in manner, the likeness failed.

Clementina, although the child of adversity, had lost both her parents when she

was too young to appreciate their value, or keenly to feel their loss; and treated with kindness and affection by every one from the hour of her birth, she only knew sorrow by sympathy, until the death of Angelina taught her grief. The laughing graces were therefore all her own, and gaiety the most fascinating and unbounded illumined her face, actuated all her movements, and played in every word she uttered.

Viola, the child of affluence, had been reared in the bosom of sorrow. Her first accents, caught from the tones of her wretched mother, were spoken in plaintive sweetness. Her eyes, accustomed to look upon the fading form of grief, assumed for life the expression such a contemplation inspired, and looked like Pity's own. Her smile, her air, her manner, all tuned from her mother's woes, were touchingly pensive, and bore in them an interesting fascination, that at once spoke to the heart of every being possessed of sensibility.

The understanding of Clementina, with all the fire of genius, would at one glance

conceive the nature of every art and science, and, as if by inspiration, acquire the first rudiments of every thing she wished to learn, and without the smallest exertion became mistress of every showy accomplishment; but in mental acquirements she had not perseverance, or perhaps powers, to delve to the very bottom of the springs of knowledge: while Viola, slower in her acquisitions, made herself mistress of the theory before she attempted the practice. To meet and overcome difficulties in her studies was Viola's peculiar delight; and, in every mental accomplishment, her uncommon application and strength of talents led her, not on wings, but by the steady unerring pace of science, to perfection. One was the child of genius, the other of judgment. The opinions of Clementina seemed always ready formed in her mind, prompt upon demand. Viola ever reflected, looked with a penetrating steady eye, and reasoned upon causes and effects before she suffered her judgment to decide. In tempers they were both perfection, and in their hearts

glowed equally bright every virtue that could adorn a female mind. Such were they both before they were summoned from St. Rosolia's upon the stage of life, when, like two dazzling meteors, they blazed for a moment, were admired and wondered at, then lost to the view for ever.

CHAP. XXII.

In about a month after the death of the marchese of Palermo, Viola was shocked and amazed by the appearance of Don Ambrosio at the castle. The duties of his profession, which called him immediately from Sicily, he pleaded in excuse for such an early intrusion; and then, with all the fascinating rhetoric his artful eloquence could supply, with all the sighs and tears, with all the insidious blandishments, the seducing looks he well knew so judiciously how to assume, he urged his suit: but although now without a father to control her, he found Viola inflexible, who rejected him with the cool impressive dignity of determination. In vain did prudence strive to veil, with courtesy, the horror and contempt she now entertained for him. The wary Ambrosio saw she despised him. His heart bled, but did not amend at the humiliating,

agonising conviction: he retired in despair, and left the castle in a state little short of distraction.

In a few days after, Viola was informed that a stranger lay dangerously ill at a fisherman's hut, not far from the castle, who refused every kind of nourishment which the miserably poor *pescatore* could offer him; and that he had no friend, no attendant, to take care of him, or give the smallest information relative to who he was; which the stranger himself refused to tell.

The humanity of Viola, ever awake to the sufferings of others, commissioned father Leopold to go immediately to the hut, and to have every possible thing instantly done for the accommodation and benefit of the stranger; and to afford all necessary relief to the *pescatore* and his family, whose poverty, she was shocked to hear, had been suffered to continue unnoticed so near the castle of Palermo. In her father's lifetime she had seldom visited this castle, round which, she took for granted, the vassals lived in comfort, protected and assisted by their lord; for, as her father had been so

prodigal to her, she believed he was liberal and generous to all his dependents. Since his death, sorrow had monopolised every thought, and she had yet made no inquiry into the state of her vassals.

Upon father Leopold's return from his embassy, he informed Viola (what she before suspected) that the stranger was Don Ambrosio, who appeared to him to be dangerously ill, he said, and so much under the dominion of despair, that he obstinately refused all nourishment and medicine.

Viola was shocked, was grieved, was agitated. She had once tenderly loved Ambrosio; she still admired his great talents and many virtues, while she contemned his vices, and recoiled with horror from him, when, through the eye of suspicion, she glanced at him as the murderer of her father. But although she had so many reasons to abhor him, she still was distressed at being the cause of misery to any one. Earnestly she therefore entreated father Leopold to return to Don Ambrosio, and exert towards him the duties of his function. "Convince him of the impiety of his conduct,"

said she; "awaken that fortitude in his mind which I well know he possesses; summon every medicinal aid for him; do all that can be done to assist, to comfort, to restore him to himself: but feed him not with one single ray of hope from me; for know, holy father, that although I should be shocked, should grieve, at his death, I could not be his, even to save his soul's existence."

From this time father Leopold was almost constantly with Ambrosio; and whenever he returned to the castle, he brought with him piteous accounts of the mental and bodily sufferings of Ambrosio, whose life and miseries he said were drawing fast to a conclusion.

The archbishop of Montreal was at this period gone to Palermo to stay some days, both upon ecclesiastical business and to arrange the train for settling the affairs of the late marchese. Viola now keenly deplored his absence; for she doubted not that his great piety and judgment would have had due influence to rouse all the dormant virtues which Ambrosio possessed

into action; while she suspected both the powers and inclination of Leopold, who, though long her father's favourite, had never been esteemed by her. She knew that he had violently opposed the marchese's taking her into favour a second time, and had exerted himself to impede the re-union of her parents; as hers and her mother's presence had totally put a period to those improprieties in her father's conduct which Leopold had, instead of censuring, not only approved, but promoted. After the marchese of Palermo's re-union with his wife, he made a new disposition of his property, and in this his last will bequeathed not one shilling to Leopold di Pessimo, whom in a prior testament he had nobly provided for. This proof of alteration in her father's opinion of Leopold, united with her own disapprobation of his general conduct, determined her to dismiss him from his sacred station in her family, as soon as she could do it without an appearance of disrespect to the memory of him who had placed him in that situation.

At length Leopold brought intelligence

to Viola of Ambrosio's being at the point of death; that the physicians had declared he could never see another day; that he had made his confession, but positively refused to receive absolution, or the host, until Viola should be prevailed upon to visit his death-bed; and to hear, in his last moments, something of the utmost importance to his eternal salvation.

Viola was dreadfully shocked and agitated. Leopold told her, it was her duty to give comfort to an expiring fellow creature, whose death she had, though innocently, absolutely occasioned; and although she had destroyed his peace in this world, she could not be so cruel, so unjust, so wicked, so diabolical, as to deprive him of every hope in the world to come.

Viola shuddered; but, convinced that it was her duty, acquiesced. Every moment was precious, Leopold said, where so few remained, and she must instantly go. She wished for Clementina to accompany her; but Leopold objected to her as a companion upon such a solemn occasion, both from her youth, and not possessing sufficient

firmness to engage in such a scene. "From your present agitation," said he, "I see you will want support; therefore take Zingaresca with you." After a moment's reflexion Viola thought he was right, and, that she might not give any unnecessary uneasiness to her beloved cousin, would not even tell her what a distressing scene she was about to encounter: and unknown to Clementina she set out with her late father's domestic chaplain and Zingaresca, who had been placed by her father about her person upon her first restoration to his favour, and who had ever since evinced herself a faithful, affectionate, intelligent domestic.

In the most pitiable agitation of both mind and frame, the young and guileless marchesa was supported by father Leopold about a quarter of a league along the sea-shore to the fisherman's hut, where she was struck with amazement upon beholding Don Ambrosio, not in his bed, as she expected to find an expiring man, but seated in an elbow-chair, looking certainly wan, languid, and attenuated, but by no means in that deplorable state she was taught to be-

lieve him in. We cannot suppose Viola was angry at not finding her lover at the point of death; but she was highly offended at being so meanly and dishonourably trepanned thither; and darting an upbraiding look at Leopold, she was about to retire, when Ambrosio, throwing himself at her feet, and grasping her robe to detain her, pleaded, with all the seducing eloquence he was master of, for her to pity, and not consign him to misery and death.

The marchesa answered him only by a look of ineffable disdain; and, while struggling to get free, indignantly demanded from father Leopold what could have induced him to act a part so degrading to the sacred profession he belonged to?

"My solemn promise to your deceased father," replied the undaunted Leopold. "In the last confession of the marchese of Palermo, he informed me that he had basely wronged the man who had nobly and gallantly attempted to preserve his life at the peril of his own; that, averse to your union with a foreigner, he had ungenerously fabricated anecdotes to Don Ambrosio's

disadvantage; and to make all the retribution in his power, he, at that awful moment, bound me by a solemn, sacred vow, to use every means that mortal ingenuity could devise to promote your union with the noble but ill-treated Don Ambrosio de Montalvan."

"It would ill befit me," said Viola with a look of firm incredulity, "to say I disbelieve the assertions of a man who has devoted his days to the service of the Almighty; but you must forgive a child for believing her parent incapable of such baseness, such dishonour. To the archbishop of Montreal my father made his last awful confession; but if to you the marchese of Palermo entrusted a secret and wishes of such importance, why did you not evince your respect to his memory, by sooner imparting this intelligence to me, and in a manner more honourable to his chaplain, and less degrading to his child?"

Leopold now lost his temper, and in a most turbulent and unbecoming manner called upon all that heaven contains to attest the truth of his assertions. He then

intemperately reprobated the cruelty and injustice of her conduct to Ambrosio; and proceeded to denounce the most dreadful maledictions upon her, and to threaten her with all the anathemas of the church if she persisted in such cruel and undutiful conduct.

Viola was shocked, but not shaken, by his violence. "That I once loved Don Ambrosio, and gave him that encouragement you accuse me of," said she, "I deny not. I am not ashamed to own it; for to be sensible of merit is no crime. In the semblance of every virtue Don Ambrosio first presented himself to me: in that form he won my affection, and I bade him hope. But was I in fault because he had two souls, two characters? that he was one day susceptible of every virtue, the next a slave to every vice? that he could this hour, with every action that was noble, just, and generous, win the friendship of him whose happiness in the next he would not scruple to blast for ever? that he could, with the most heroic valour, obtain for himself fame and honour, and in the next moment tarnish his

fame and blight his laurels, by insulting with every indignity, and wounding by every cruelty, those whom his hand had deprived of liberty, who therefore more forcibly claimed his kindness? Such is the real character of Don Ambrosio de Montalvan; and when I had incontestable proof of its being so, I found the Ambrosio I had loved a delusive phantom, with which my affection vanished. Such is the portrait facts have drawn of Don Ambrosio, and this is the resolution I have formed on viewing it—never to be his: nor can the story of my father's last request to you, nor the anathemas you threaten me with, alter my determination. He, whose omnipresent eye sees into the inmost recesses of the darkest heart, can penetrate the base assassin's secret haunts, and beholds his most wary actions, will not suffer the child of the late marchese of Palermo ever to unite herself with Don Ambrosio de Montalvan.—Zingaresca, open the door, and go with me to the castle.—Father Leopold, you return there no more."

With a look that spoke every feeling of

her soul, and with all the dignity of conscious virtue, she turned to the door; but Zingaresca obeyed her not.

"Zingaresca!" said she, "did you not hear me?"

"I did," replied that treacherous woman, "and also heard the last commands of the deceased marchese to this holy man. To see them obeyed I came hither, and shall not move until the will of my dear late lord is fulfilled."

"Merciful Heaven! what can this mean?" exclaimed Viola shuddering.

"It means," said Leopold, "that you quit not this hovel until the will of your father is accomplished by your union with Don Ambrosio."

"My union with Don Ambrosio never can take place, since tortures shall not rend acquiescence from me," said the marchesa determinately.

Leopold took out his missal—"Perform your office, holy father," cried Zingaresca: "I will make oath that I heard the marchesa assent to the union."

"And so too will we," said both the fish-

erman and his wife, who now made their appearance from an inner kind of room.

"Your refusal will avail you nothing," said the worthless Leopold.—"A vessel is waiting to convey you from Sicily the moment the ceremony is over. The validity of the marriage will never be doubted;—for who will disbelieve the solemn testimony of your father's domestic chaplain; of this respectable woman, and of these simple, honest people; while you can have no witness in your behalf, and your own affirmation will not be sufficient in law?"

Viola burst into tears, and, in a voice of agony, demanded if Spain's boasted hero could act such a perfidious part?

Ambrosio was silent; her conduct during this scene of villany had charmed him to enthusiasm; he admired, adored her, even more than he had before done; and the good properties of his soul, awakened by the example she gave him, would have urged him on to the side of honour, had not some words she emphatically uttered told him most horribly that he had nothing to hope from her. Perfidy and force were

therefore all he had now to depend upon; and vengeance for the suspicions she so unaccountably entertained urged him to perseverance in this scheme of villany.

Zingaresca now grasped Viola round the waist, to fix her to the spot near Ambrosio's chair. Leopold began the marriage ceremony; and Ambrosio was just placing the ring upon her finger, in spite of her shrieks, her struggles, her agony almost amounting to phrensy, when the door of the hut was burst in, and the archbishop of Montreal and Clementina entered. Viola flew into the arms of her reverend uncle, who, casting a look of menace at the perfidious wretches there assembled, bore his lovely and agitated niece to his carriage, which was near, and with her and Clementina drove off instantly to the castle.

When Viola left the castle with Leopold, Clementina was engaged writing to some of her friends at St. Rosolia's; and when she had completed her letters, and sought her cousin, she learned that the marchesa was gone out with Leopold and Zingaresca, two persons whom Clementina believed ca-

pable of any mischief. Viola's going out with them, unknown to herself, increased her suspicions of perfidy, which she scarcely knew what had before awakened. Their long absence augmented her alarms; and in the restless roving humour her anxiety worked her into, she strayed out of the castle-grounds upon the sea-shore, towards the hut, to where fear and suspicion pointed. Footsteps, which she now saw upon the sands, confirmed her apprehensions, and she almost flew to the hut, where, the moment she arrived, she heard the sound of her beloved Viola's voice in cadences of distress. Clementina strove in vain to gain admittance; her knocks and calls were disregarded or unheard, from the tumult within. The piteous shrieks of Viola at length appalled the ears of Clementina, who re-echoed them with increased violence, as she frantically ran round and round the hut in search of a place to enter by. In this moment of agonised distress she heard the sound of a carriage coming the road from Palermo, which wound at no very considerable distance from the hovel. Wildly and impe-

tuously she darted into the highway to meet the carriage and implore assistance; when, oh raptures! she beheld the equipage of her guardian, who, unexpected by any one, was returning to the castle in search of papers necessary for the completion of the business he was engaged in.

Viola was so completely subdued by agitation and terror, that she was compelled to retire to her chamber the moment she got home, where Clementina remained with her almost the whole day; and before the good prelate retired to rest, he visited his wards, and told them, " he should take them on the morrow to St. Rosolia's, there to remain while Don Ambrosio continued in Sicily, since he was now convinced it would be less injurious to his beloved Viola's peace and health to be where every scene around her would feed her unceasing grief for her incomparable mother, than to remain exposed to the dreadful apprehension of new outrage; and as soon as he had delivered them into the protection of the abbadessa of St. Rosolia's, he should

take proper measures for the punishment of the vile Leopold and his accomplices;" and with a paternal embrace, and a most fervent benediction, this amiable man parted from his beloved wards, never more in this life to behold them.

The inestimable prelate of Montreal was found next morning a clay cold corse by his old *cameriro.* No mark of violence appeared about him; yet the moment of his death, with the extraordinary circumstance of no one belonging to the church appearing to pay the due respect, and go through the requisite forms upon the demise of such an illustrious catholic, might have introduced suspicion into the minds of the lovely cousins, had not grief and horror so totally occupied their thoughts, that they minded not the singularity of the dead calm that reigned through the castle, that no one appeared from Palermo or St. Rosolia's. Viola had ordered expresses to go with the fatal intelligence to the chapter of the archbishop's diocese, to Palermo, and St. Rosolia's; and to summon dottore

Balsamico to her uncle's truly worthy valet, who had fallen into a fit upon discovering the dreadful calamity, and had been conveyed to his chamber dangerously ill: and after this exertion the marchesa sunk upon the bosom of the sympathising Clementina, so completely subdued by grief and dismay, that she could only weep, and lament with her cousin the dreadful blow they had just sustained.

Totally absorpt in sorrow, they could not lessen the food offered by the officious domestics; and soon after the untouched dinner was removed, Clementina providentially observed a letter lying at her feet, which, upon opening, she found contain these words, almost unintelligibly written:

"HONOURED LADIES,

"I am grieved to say villany is at work. All who could protect have been removed by bad means; and this castle is not one moment longer a place of safety for the innocent."

CHAP. XXIII.

VIOLA and Clementina were thrown into the utmost consternation. Suspicion once awakened, they clearly saw their danger. Struck with the conviction of their guardian having been destroyed by the visitation of a mortal hand, that the schemes of the diabolical Leopold and Ambrosio might meet no further opposition, the imminence and magnitude of the perils which threatened them suspended their grief for a time, and every idea of their minds was now called into council upon measures for escaping the dangers which encompassed them.

It was evident, by their hearing nothing from St. Rosolia's, that the express had not been allowed to reach the place of destination; and this circumstance clearly evinced their intercourse being cut off, and that they would not be allowed to receive succour from thence, or from the city. Neither could they possibly expect that any attempt

of theirs to gain Palermo, or the convent, could be successful; and after much painful deliberation, they were both convinced that their only hope of safety would be in an immediate flight from Sicily.

"But even could we, my Clementina," said the marchesa, "contrive to procure a vessel to convey us secretly away, whither can we go? We have no friends, no protectors in any country we can fly to."

"Yes," replied Clementina, "we shall find both a friend and a protector at Naples."

"At Naples! Who?"

"The duchessa di Manfredonia, the protector of the unfortunate, the friend of the destitute. I know her character well, from a Neapolitan girl who came to St. Rosolia's after you left it. The duchessa is amiable, sensible, and compassionate: we will fly to her, tell her our distress; she will protect and place us in a safe asylum. Since the death of her only son and his wife, she has deserted the castle of Manfredonia, and resides entirely at Naples. Her grandson, the present duca, a wonderfully amiable

and learned man, chiefly lives with her; and he will prove a powerful auxiliary to us."

"My dear ardent cousin, you make your arrangements as if no obstacle could impede your way: but consider, would it be quite consistent with delicacy for us to intrude for protection where we know this young and, as I suppose, unmarried duca resides?"

"Yes, I know he is unmarried: but his living at the duchessa's cannot possibly affect our delicacy, since he is quite an old man."

"Her grandson so old!—Then surely she must be superannuated, or at least inactive, and could be of no service to us."

"Indeed she is not: she is a wonderful woman; and although certainly very old, age seems to have had no effect upon her mind, but to expand the powers of her understanding, and to enlarge her benevolence."

The duchessa di Manfredonia being the only person out of Sicily or Lisbon whose character and residence they were ac-

quainted with, these two unfortunate and singularly desitute young and totally unexperienced women at length determined, could they effect their escape, to go to Naples, and throw themselves upon her goodness for protection; but in whom to confide the arrangement for their escape was a matter of greater difficulty still. They had reason to suspect the fidelity of every one around them; and the perfidy of Zingaresca taught them that even the most specious were capable of treachery.

"Alas!" said Clementina; "and amongst the numbers in this castle who have lived by your father's bounty, and some have received signal favours from him, there now is not one whom his unhappy child can with confidence apply to for assistance!"

"No," replied Viola, blushing for human nature; "no, not one amongst those whom gratitude to my father ought to attach to me! But there is in the castle a man of sullen temper, and unfortunate appearance, who at an early period of my father's life saved him from perishing in the sea, at imminent peril to himself; which

noble and humane action, I am grieved to say, met its only reward in the consciousness of having done his duty, and saved a fellow creature from destruction. My father's heart was turned by his favourites from poor Bernardo, his preserver. He was taught to think ill of him, and therefore hardly used him; and I am shocked to think, that on every occasion Bernardo's comfort was since unheeded, and the misery of his vassalage augmented by the barbed arrow of ingratitude. Upon my arrival here, after the decease of my father, all the domestics hailed me with fawning servility, and elaborate speeches, except Bernardo, who then appeared not. I afterwards accidentally met him: he looked mournfully at me, burst into tears, and, without speaking, precipitately retired. That man, I told my dear deceased uncle, should be the first in my family provided for, and that man is the only one amongst them that I will confide in."

"And on that man's faith will I risk my life," said Clementina.

Having now determined upon the only

plan of safety which appeared within their power, they exerted all their ingenuity to obtain an interview with Bernardo, unobserved by those spies they doubted not were every-where around them. They accomplished that difficult and hazardous project; and Bernardo strongly recommended their flight that very night.

Bernardo's intellects being held in sovereign contempt by the other domestics, he was thought incapable of observation, and they scrupled not to hold their cabals in ambiguous sentences before him, believing them incomprehensible to him. But they were deceived in Bernardo, who possessed acute observation, a clear understanding, and a feeling heart. From the extreme deformity of his figure he early became an object for derision to the unthinking and profligate. His sensitive sensibility made him shrink from ridicule; taught him to shun society, and retire within himself; and, in the end, the keenness of his feelings changed him into the morose and apparently stupefied misanthrope. He had caught, from what he had heard that day, sufficient to convince him that the marchesa

and her cousin were to be carried off whilst in their present unprotected state; and reflexion and observation led him to believe that the archbishop had been unfairly removed; and interest for his dear young lady taught him how to manage the conveyance of that billet which roused her to a sense of her danger.

The suspicions of Bernardo were too well grounded. As the good and virtuous are impelled by sympathy to friendship, so villany soon finds its counterpart. During the illness of the marchese of Palermo, Ambrosio and Leopold formed a league of interest:—we cannot degrade friendship by calling the cement which binds the vicious to each other by that sacred name. The marchese died without leaving any provision for his once favourite parasite, and Leopold therefore determined to provide for himself. He undertook to effect an union between the young marchesa and Ambrosio, for which service one third of her wealth was to be his. The venal domestics, all his own creatures, placed in the service of the marchese at his recommenda-

tion, were easily secured; and upon the failure of the first attempt at the fisherman's hut, by the interposition of the good archbishop, Leopold resolved to prevent such another unexpected rescue by the murder of Viola's only protector.

The wary Leopold, ever committing crimes, was always provided with salvos. The murder of the archbishop was a dangerous enterprise: but he was too well versed in all the chicanery of priestcraft not to be guarded against contingencies; he was therefore always armed with indulgences of every description, and absolutions for all the sins he ever did or ever should commit. Ambrosio, too, was by his means equally well fortified. Yet, notwithstanding these infallible talismanic treasures, Leopold determined to act secretly, nor to allow the eye of suspicion to glance at him. He therefore, by a subterraneous passage, re-entered the castle, where Viola had forbid his return; and remaining there in secret, he had a sufficient quantity of opium infused in the archbishop's wine at supper

to cause profound sleep, but did not attempt enough for death, lest it should fail, and poison would tell tales: but going more securely to work, he and one of his most devoted creatures entered the chamber of his sleeping victim, who awoke in that blessed paradise where his virtues placed him. By holding a down bed tight over him, they effected their diabolical purpose, and left no trace of murder. Leopold, not choosing that the death of the archbishop should transpire at Palermo until the succeeding day, took his measures accordingly. There was a vessel belonging to Ambrosio in readiness to convey them to Spain, and in the dead of night Viola and Clementina were to be carried off.

Bernardo had a relation, a fisherman, who lived at no great distance from the castle; and this man, whose name was Stephano, he engaged to be ready with his *battello* near the mouth of a cave upon the shore, which communicated with the castle by the same subterraneous passage Leopold had benefited by.

At an hour earlier than usual, Viola, pleading indisposition, retired to bed, and dismissed her attendants for the night, as Clementina was to sleep with her. The moment her women departed, the marchesa arose; and, quickly redressing, took all the money and jewels her cabinet contained, and with Clementina proceeded to follow Bernardo's directions. From Viola's dressing-room there was a door of communication which led to one of the castle towers, that from some ancient tradition was reported to be haunted, for which reason none of the domestics ever approached it. Quickly they descended the staircase of this tower, which led them into the vaults of the castle, where Bernardo, disguised as a *pescatore*, was waiting for them; and who now safely conducted the trembling fugitives through the subterraneous way to the cave where Stephano was posted. In two hampers were Viola and Clementina conveyed on board the fishing-smack by Stephano and Bernardo; and piously invoking the care of Providence, they instantly put to sea. The

wind was favourable, the Mediterranean calm, their boatmen skilful; and notwithstanding the distance between Palermo and Naples, they arrived at the latter place without encountering any accident, and in less time than they even hoped for; when Viola liberally rewarded Stephano, whom she advised by no means to return at present to Sicily, lest the vengeance of Leopold and Ambrosio should await him.

Bernardo knew Naples well: he therefore safely conducted his lovely mistress and her beautiful companion to the villa di Manfredonia. The duchessa being easy of access, our two fair fugitives found no difficulty in obtaining an interview; when Clementina, although evidently under the influence of that timidity so amiable in youth, introduced herself and cousin, and told the short story of their distress with such a fascinating grace, that the duchessa instantly promised to protect them: and in a very few moments the beautiful simplicity of their manners, the uncommon loveliness of their appearance, with their helplessness, and

the singularity of their case, awakened her interest and anxiety so forcibly, that she offered them an immediate asylum in her own house; which they, as may be supposed, most gratefully accepted.

The duchessa was at this period in her seventy-sixth year, and was, as Clementina had heard, a most extraordinary woman both in mind and frame. Her grandson was then gone with a particular friend, conte di Elfridii, into Tuscany: her domestic chaplain, father Rinaldo, she therefore employed to lay before his Neapolitan majesty the grievances his fair Sicilian subjects complained of; and in due time the marchesa's affairs were securely arranged in Sicily, and proper guardians appointed for her person;—one a Sicilian nobleman of worth and abilities; the other the duchessa di Manfredonia, with whom she fixed her residence, in compliance with the duchessa's wish and her own.

Leopold was excommunicated, and banished the Two Sicilies. Had there been sufficient proof for entering into a legal pro-

secution against him for the murder of the archbishop, they could not have executed it, as he absconded from Sicily the moment he learned to whose protection the marchesa had flown.

END OF VOL. III.

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